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ABSTRACT

This walking primer is intended for teachers and parents who are interested in early childhood wellness. The manual contains 40 photographs and 60 fitness walking exercises, walking games and fun workshops in nutrition and children's weight control, walking field trips, and guidance for the walking teacher. Attention is given to winning parental and administrative support. (JD)

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Walking for Little Children

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Creative Workshops
for Teaching
Walking & Wellness

Robert Sweetgall
Robert Neeves, PhD

SP 029 709

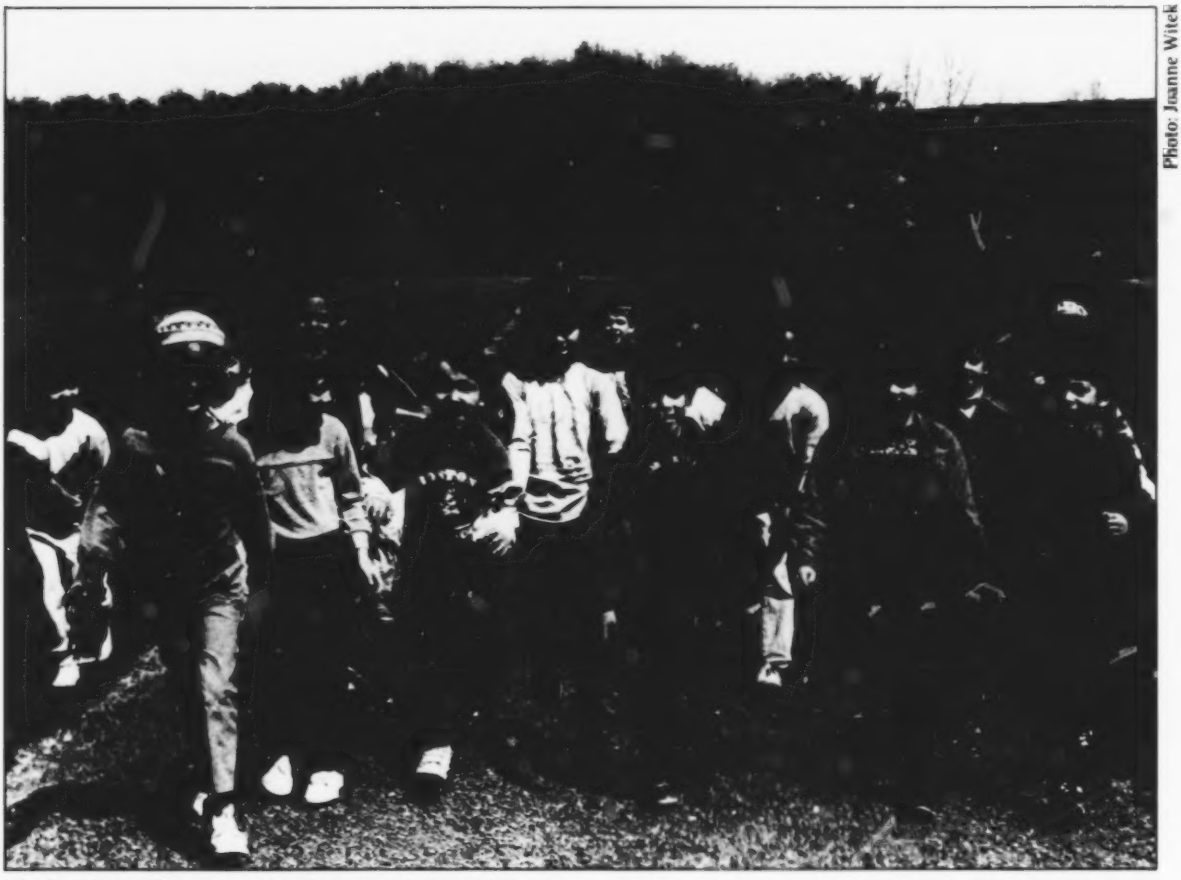

Photo: Joanne Witek

The Fort River Elementary School Walkers. Amherst, MA

If you are a primary educator concerned about the well-being of your children, then **Walking for Little Children** should excite you. This resource book is about lifestyle, fitness, health, games and fun. It uses ***walking*** to teach ***wellness***.

What do wellness and walking have in common? Actually everything. Research indicates that people with active walking lifestyles have less chance of developing heart disease because walking helps control blood pressure, cholesterol levels, obesity and stress. These risk factors impact us cumulatively throughout life. Your plus and minus health scoreboard began in your crib.

During the kindergarten to third grade period we need to start putting more plus marks on a child's health scoreboard. That is the purpose of **Walking for Little Children**. It gives you some tools to help your students build healthy foundations on which to grow.

In the walking workshops that follow, a new approach to wellness education is presented. It is based on doing, sensing, exploring and discovering. Your children will have fun and learn experientially on walks. As you walk with them, you will learn too. On walks, you become a role model for your children.

Any academic subject taught in a classroom can be reinforced on a walk. The walking exercises detailed in this book integrate language, communications, math, science, geography, history, and the arts with wellness to develop a well-balanced child. As John Locke stated in **Some Thoughts Concerning Education**, "A sound mind in a sound body is a short but full description of a happy state in this world."

The cost of implementing **Walking for Little Children** averages out to about ***10*** minutes a day. Sometimes it's not easy to sacrifice 10 minutes of classroom time to take your children out for a walk. Yet when you see how ***walking*** enhances classroom learning, you may realize that those footsteps are not a sacrifice but a necessity.

Walking for Little Children

Creative Workshops for Teaching Walking & Wellness

Robert Sweetgall
Robert Neeves, PhD
Exercise Physiology

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Robert Neeves
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Other books by Robert Sweetgall:
- **Fitness Walking**
- **Walking Wellness Student Workbook**
- **Walking Wellness Teacher's Guide**
- **The Walker's Journal**

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To the great 19th and 20th century walker,
Edward Payson Weston,
who inspired many children with handshakes
on his walks across America.

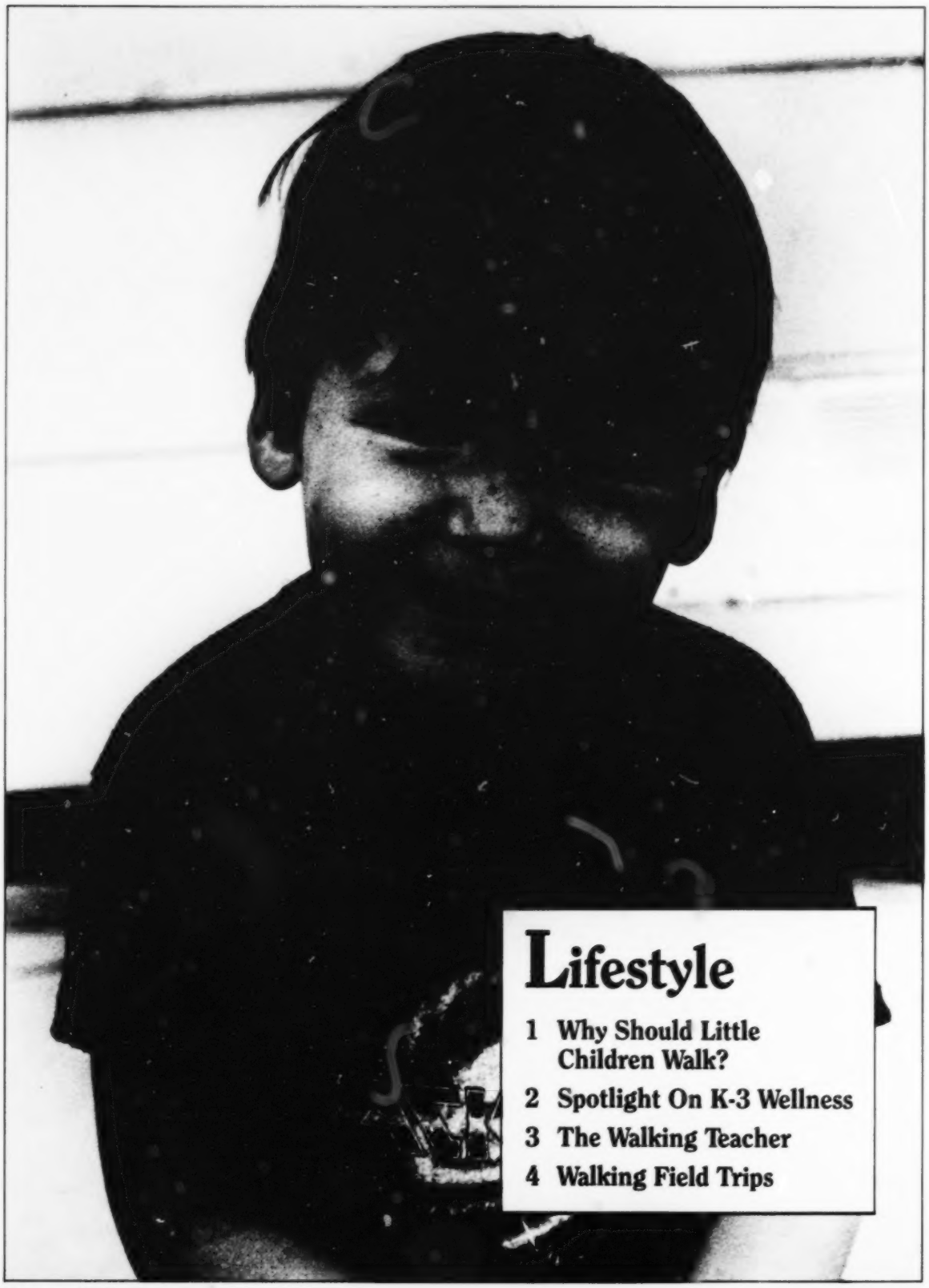


Photo: Linda Hartung

Lifestyle

1 Why Should Little Children Walk?

2 Spotlight On K-3 Wellness

3 The Walking Teacher

4 Walking Field Trips

Shandon Wallowing, age 4—
ABC Head Start, Lame Deer, Montana

1

Why Should Little Children Walk?

The average American child lives on a high-fat diet, watches 25 hours of TV weekly, and rides a bus to school. Many breathe secondary tobacco smoke in their homes and face stress there too. High blood pressure and elevated cholesterol levels are now being found in 3- and 4-year-olds.

Many people believe heart disease starts after we turn 40. Actually, it begins before age 12. The history of 5,000 residents of Framingham, Massachusetts (The Framingham Heart Study) clearly indicates that heart disease is a *lifestyle* disease. Yet you hear people say, "Heart disease runs in my family," implying that it is inherited. To a degree it is... but not so much the *genes* as the *lifestyle*—the way we eat, drink, smoke, exercise and handle stress. All the things we learned at the dinner table. This is why it is so important that little children step off on the right foot in life by controlling their weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and stress levels—all of which can be accomplished on a safe and simple walking program.

Walking is especially critical for K-3 children whose bones, muscles, fat cells and minds are all in the developmental stage. For example, fat cells develop during our fastest growth years—the first 7 years and around puberty. Then they stay with us for life. That's why so many overweight kids tend to stay overweight all their lives. Yet walking mobilizes adrenalin which triggers the release of stored fats for energy. If we only walked more as kids, we'd all be carrying around smaller "suitcases" of fat cells later in life. But, no one ever told us this stuff when it counted.

Children learn from the actions of adults. Some teachers who smoke have a hard time appreciating the power of role modeling. Applied to exercise, role modeling suggests that we should be physically active right alongside our kids —but how many teachers can run and jump rope? Every teacher can walk regularly.

Twenty Reasons Why Kids Should Walk

Walking...

builds self-esteem
builds strong bones

increases attentiveness
increases muscle mass

controls disruptive behavior
controls fat cell growth

diminishes stress
diminishes hyperactivity

strengthens communication skills
strengthens the heart

develops a good wellness attitude
develops good posture

stabilizes friendships
stabilizes blood pressure

encourages use of senses
encourages drug-free living

promotes language development
promotes physical coordination

lets everyone participate
lets everyone have fun

The key to a successful exercise program is regularity. Paffenbarger's study on 17,000 Harvard graduates disclosed that it was NOT the varsity jocks who lived longer, healthier lives; it was the alumni who remained physically active all their lives who had healthier histories. That's where walking shines. It's the only exercise we can all do safely for the rest of our lives. How many senior citizens do you see bouncing on aerobic dance floors?

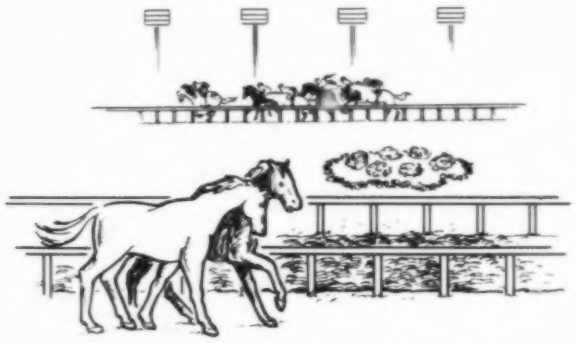
The "no pain - no gain" theory of exercise is a myth. Painless, pleasant exercise does produce gains. This is especially important for kids because they have low pain thresholds. Most children experience side-stitch pains when running. It shows on their faces. Adult runners don't look so comfortable either. When was the last time you saw a jogger smile? A kid can smile, laugh, and have fun on a walk.

In some areas of physical education today, there is still heavy emphasis on "muscular strength"—chin ups, pull ups, push ups—activities that destroy a child's desire for play. What's fun about doing push ups? Besides, did you ever know of anyone who ever died from lack of arm strength?

Yet simple walking tones almost every muscle in the body—particularly the heart. It also strengthens bones, helping to combat osteoporosis (bone weakening). In walking, the impact forces on our skeleton are about one times our body weight. This type of stress creates new bone tissue which increases the thickness of the walls of the bone. Jogging places two to four times one's weight on the joints. Distributed unevenly, this can distort the layer-by-layer build up of bone tissue early in a child's life. Some kids' bodies are mechanically suited to handle this, while others are not. But, how does one determine the difference? We cannot.

Competition has become the "in thing" these days—even at the pee-wee level. This is great for those few kids who make the starting team, but what about the other 99%

who become sideline spectators and TV-loving lounge lizards? Walking de-emphasizes competition. Walking lets everyone win. Today we are so busy testing kids for fitness and ranking them on how fast they can run a mile. These tests are painful and distasteful to many children. They teach youngsters to dislike exercise. By failing physical fitness tests, our kids are losing self-esteem. Walking gives every child a sense of accomplishment. Instead of testing kids so much, maybe we should start teaching them about pleasurable, aerobic walking. Most children have never experienced 20 continuous minutes of rhythmic aerobic exercise before reaching the sixth grade.



"When did you quit running?"

So what if Johnny can't score well on the one-mile run! Why don't we simply focus on motivating him to improve? There are plenty of 80-year-old folks walking around who never would have scored well on a battery of fitness tests, but they've never been in the hospital one day in their lives. They've just managed to eat well-balanced meals, avoid tobacco and drugs, and walk every day.

When children walk, they are getting more than physical exercise. The average kindergartner has a 6000-word vocabulary. *You can use at least that many words on one single walk!*

Edward Payson Weston, walking across America in 1909 at a pace of 41 miles per day—at age 71.

In the primary grades, children do not learn by insightful reasoning. They learn by smelling, tasting, touching, hearing, and seeing. Walking lets children discover their world through their senses. Children can learn about their environment on foot better than any other way. How much sensing can you do by looking out a school bus or classroom window?

Most kindergartners get 10 hours of sleep and still require classroom naps. That's a lot of "down time." The quality of sleep that any of us get, kindergartners included, is directly proportional to the number of calories we burn in one day. Walking burns three to six calories per minute. Sitting burns one calorie per minute. Think how much better you sleep on the days when you are active!

Keeping K-3 children focused on learning their lessons isn't always easy. Some have attention spans equal to a double TV commercial. Classrooms become warm and stuffy after a couple of hours. The rise in room temperature and carbon dioxide (CO_2) levels eventually causes children to become drowsy. The CO_2 causes a toxicity response in their nervous system which in turn causes a decrease in a child's breathing rate. The net result is mental dullness and impaired learning due to oxygen deficiencies in the brain. Walking pumps fresh oxygen into their brains to refill their "think tanks." It wakes kids up for the next lesson!

On the other end of the spectrum is the hyperactive child—the "Mexican jumping bean" who bounces off the classroom walls while burning off his sugar-coated breakfast. Walking helps take some of the "wild bandit" out of your restless kids by stabilizing blood sugar levels.

"Walking would teach people the quality that youngsters find so hard to learn—patience."
Edward Payson Weston

In education, program implementation often boils down to "the budget." We never seem to have enough money to buy new things—especially exercise equipment and facilities. Yet what does it cost to take a class out walking?

Most primary teachers are becoming more and more stressed by the amount of subject matter that they are now required to teach. It seems that what we once learned as first and second graders is now essential material for a kindergartner—the alphabet, the numbers, and even computer technology. Many kids are learning to memorize information ***without using the thinking process***. Johnny can say "one, two, three, four, five," but he can't explain what "five" stands for.

In having to cover an extended "menu" of subjects, primary teachers have lost a significant amount of their freedom. A bird lands on the classroom windowsill with a straw in its mouth and starts building a nest. The teacher notices this wonderful, spontaneous event but has a guilt trip breaking away from the A-B-C cookbook lesson plan. "Bird" starts with a "B" and so does "build"—so what ever happened to experiential learning?

Walking is experiential. Anything taught in the confines of a classroom can also be taught during a walk. Colors, shapes, distances, sizes, numbers, spellings, nature, science, history, geography, verbal communications, sharing, respect—you name it.

Walking inspires creativity in everyone. When that fresh air breeze brushes your face on a walk, it reminds you that you're alive and well. Walking lets us experience inspiration. That kind of stuff is hard to find in textbooks.

But most of all, walking builds a child's confidence. Walking lets all children realize that they are "A-OK." *That's the bottom line.*

Robert Sweetgall

Robert E. Reeves

2

Spotlight On K-3 Wellness

Can there be a better time to teach children wellness than at the primary level? This is when youngsters form habits and attitudes about exercise, fitness, nutrition, tobacco use and drugs. One healthy experience, like a fun walk, becomes etched in a kindergartner's mind for life.

Physiologically, the K-3 years are most critical too—for the heart, blood vessels, bones, muscles and fat cells. In effect, the health of our nation in the year 2020 will depend largely on the lifestyles that our little children learn today.

Despite this, we devote the least in resources to wellness education at the K-3 level. We spend large blocks of time transporting high school basketball teams and cheerleaders all around the county. Then we turn around and say we cannot afford to devote 90 minutes a week to health and physical education for our little children. Priorities!

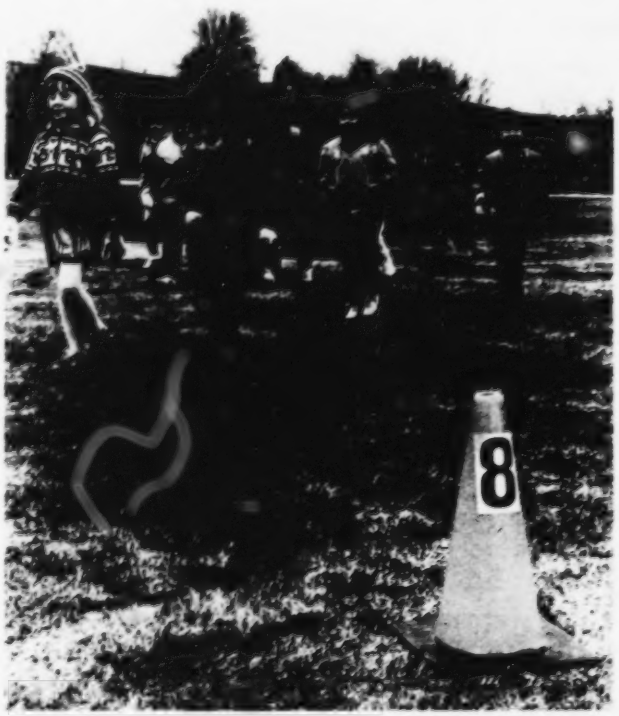
Balancing Priorities

Why isn't wellness education a daily curriculum requirement for every K-3 child in every school in the nation? The good news is that walking and wellness need not cost that much. Footsteps are free. The major cost commitment in wellness education is time. How many school districts take wellness and walking seriously enough to devote one day of teacher in-service training to it? How many teachers take their children out for 15-minute walks each day? How about 10-minute walks? Some people might question whether 10 minutes of walking is beneficial. It absolutely is! In fact, it's more aerobic exercise than the average K-3 student gets today anyway.

One morning at Fort River Elementary School in Amherst, Massachusetts, a few kindergarten teachers walked with their classes around the school grounds. Each kindergartner walked about one-half mile. At the time this hardly seemed like a workout—yet later that morning these same teachers acknowledged, "We've never seen the kids so alert and ready to start learning. We're going to walk with our kids every day!"

Yet, at another elementary school I took about 400 students for a similar walk after a 45-minute assembly program. The kids at my side looked so happy and excited. They pointed out birds and squirrels as they rustled through the autumn leaves. They asked questions about walking and nature and the weather. At the end of the walk we placed our fingers over our arteries to feel our hearts beating fast. We discussed why walking is healthy and how it burns up body fat. During this walk, one kindergarten teacher seemed stressed. When I asked her what was wrong, she said, "I have a lesson to teach."

I felt we had already covered it.



At Fort River Elementary School (Amherst, MA) Mrs. Joanne Witek teaches walking and wellness concepts even at the kindergarten level.

3

The Walking Teacher

The concept of adding "Walking" to your classroom curriculum may scare you at first, especially in view of all the curricula mandated these days. To look at "Walking" as one more required subject that you have to teach is a mistake. Instead, think of it as a tool to reinforce other subjects.

For instance, if you simply take your kids for 5-minute walks each day, they will learn about the colors of flowers, the movement of clouds, the sounds of nature, the flights of birds, and the fragrance of fresh air. With every walk, their vocabulary and speaking skills will increase. They will become sharper observers and better explorers. Their creativity will blossom. And in the process, your kids will be getting the physical activity necessary for good health. They may also develop a liking for exercise and movement.

On a walk, you can learn about...

History, geography, weather, nature, vegetation, science, animals

Geometric shapes, counting, addition, subtraction, fractions, estimating, logic, reasoning, space, time

Aerobics, warm-ups, posture, walking technique, pacing, strength, stretching

Listening, teamwork, cooperation, trust, friendship, sharing

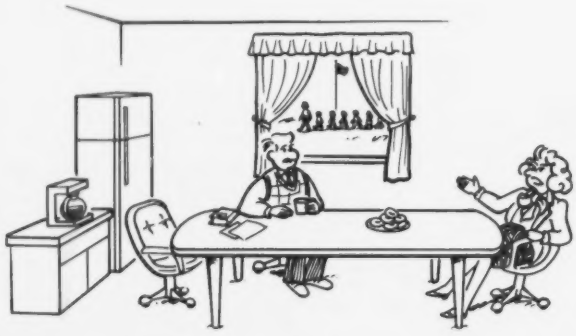
Reading, spelling, vocabulary, writing, speaking

Observing, exploring, discovering, navigating, sensing, recalling

Nutrition, energy, weight control, lifestyle planning, drug-free living, relaxation

Walking, Teaching, and Learning

The human mind works better with increased blood flow and oxygen. Walking is one exercise that stimulates both the body and mind this way because it relaxes the body to inspire creative thinking. On walks, much of your teaching presentation will blossom spontaneously. Likewise, your children will bring up subjects that you are already studying in the classroom—colors, shapes, sounds, smells, numbers and feelings. When you think about it, there is hardly a subject that cannot be touched on during a walk.



"All I keep hearing from my kids is, 'When are we gonna walk like Mrs. Johnson's class?'"

Teaching Objectives

The primary goal of **Walking for Little Children** is to help you develop a more balanced student—healthy in body as well as mind. The walking lesson plans and workshop exercises in this resource guidebook are designed to:

- promote active walking lifestyles in a non-competitive, win-win environment by involving 100% of your class.
- integrate health and physical education by focusing on nutrition, tobacco, drugs, stress and hygiene during walks.
- improve communication skills, analytical reasoning and scientific understanding on walks.
- promote honesty, respect, cooperation and teamwork.
- help children appreciate their environment.
- draw family members, school staff and children closer together.
- improve the posture, endurance and the overall fitness level of each student.
- help students create their own walking health plan.

Teaching Prerequisites

You do not need a doctorate in exercise physiology to take children walking. Your most vital asset as a walking teacher is your enthusiasm for walking! Enthusiasm spreads rapidly with little children. Walking sells itself because it makes people feel good all over. If you are not quite convinced, try the following exercise.

A Walking Exercise For Teachers

One day at school while you are sitting down at lunch, or during a free period, take a short "time out" to write down all the adjectives describing how you feel at the moment. Then, go outside for a short five- or ten-minute easy walk. On your return, take a few minutes to summarize your feelings. Be specific in describing your physical and mental states.

After completing both charts, respond to the questions below:

	Yes	No
1. Did something positive result from your walk?	☐	☐
2. Was the walk worthwhile?	☐	☐
3. Would you be willing to try a similar walk tomorrow?	☐	☐

If you checked "yes" one or more times, walking is working for you! Keep it up!

If you checked "no" on all 3 questions, please don't give up on walking. Try some more walks later in the week under different circumstances—a new time of day, a new walking path, etc.

Return on Investment

Assuming you do invest 5, 10 or 20 minutes of class time a day on walks with your kids, what can you expect in return? The list below will give you some idea of the possibilities.

Your return on investment could include:

- more creative lesson plans
- reduced classroom stress and frustrations
- greater muscle tone
- reduced body fat composition
- improved aerobic endurance
- lower resting heart rate
- more daytime energy
- greater teaching satisfaction
- more responsive children
- reduced risk of heart disease and osteoporosis
- improved sleep (after school!)

It's kind of nice when you can do something healthy for your kids while helping yourself simultaneously. While you may not notice big changes at first, be patient. Over the course of a full school year, these benefits will be realized if you and your class just maintain ***a consistent walking program.***

Let's Get Our Walking Program Started

You are anxious to start up a school walking program—but where do you begin? First, start by reading **Walking for Little Children** cover to cover. Dozens of ideas for starting your program will present themselves as you discover the workshop lessons ahead. Many of these lessons will tie into subjects that you already teach. As you read on, jot down on a planning sheet all of the ideas and ways that you can think of to integrate walking into your curriculum. Try not to rule out any possibilities.

Keep comparing your ideas to the *Teaching Guidelines* outlined in the accompanying list and the specific workshops that lie ahead. Soon, all these ideas will culminate into a specific teaching action plan for you. If you are uncertain about pulling off one type of workshop, don't worry about it. Do it anyway. Some of the best learning experiences happen spontaneously!

Guidelines for Introducing a School Walking Program

- Start out simple. First aim at establishing a positive attitude toward walking. Walking field trips and walking games usually score big with kids.
- Gradually begin to introduce fitness walking exercises and the principles of good walking posture.
- From the beginning, try to involve your children in year-long walking projects to help them establish a pattern of ***walking regularity.***
- Do not hesitate to repeat specific walking exercises. True learning comes from reinforcement.
- Create an ***incentive awards system*** early in your program to give kids long-term goals for motivation.
- Emphasize self-improvement instead of competition.
- Whenever reasonable, walk with your children.
- Invite parents, other teachers, and your administration to actively participate in your walking workshop lessons.
- Try taking your children out on walks every day—even if only for five minutes.
- Document walks in a class scrapbook.

What's Ahead in Walking for Little Children?

Lifestyle

1. **Why Should Little Children Walk?** The total justification for having young children walk.
2. **Spotlight on K-3 Wellness.** Emphasizing wellness in primary education.
3. **The Walking Teacher.** Guidelines for starting a K-3 Walking Wellness program.
4. **Walking Field Trips.** Exciting ways to do mini-explorations in the neighborhood.

Fitness

5. **Fitness Walking for Children.** Walking strategies to help children condition their hearts.
6. **Slow, Medium and Fast Walks.** Learning and practicing different walking paces.
7. **The Little Straw Walk.** A six-minute fitness game in which children walk briskly to win straws.
8. **Walking Technique.** Simple exercises and games to teach children how to walk correctly for life.
9. **Five Minutes for Muscles.** Basic muscle-strengthening and stretching routines made simple.

Health

10. **Nutrition and Walking.** Children learn about healthy and unhealthy foods on walks and how far they'd need to walk to burn off the calories in various foods. Walking off fat is also covered.
11. **Tobaccoless Road.** Children formulate commitments for tobacco-free living on class walks and try to influence others in a similar manner.
12. **A Healthy Day in Animal Kingdom.** The animal kingdom is used to role model healthy lifestyles for children.

Games

13. **Walking Games.** A variety of walking games to exercise and entertain kids.
14. **Our Walk Across America.** A math/geography/walking project in which children "walk" their way from Philadelphia, PA to Seattle, WA.
15. **Cross-Country Pen-Pals.** Exciting ideas for practicing writing and communicating with schools across the nation.
16. **The Piggy Bank Game.** Children save all the loose change they find on their walks in a class piggy bank to support a nutritious party which they plan themselves.
17. **Walking Balloons.** Children hunt and burst balloons containing instructions for walking exercises.

Progress

18. **Walking Awards.** Creative ideas are discussed for rewarding children for their walking accomplishments.
19. **Administrative & Parental Support.** The role parents and administrators can play in a walking/wellness elementary school program.
20. **Summertime.** Ways of reinforcing the year's projects and lessons are given with ideas for summer and fall follow-up.

4

Walking Field Trips

Dream a little! If you could take off from school to walk anywhere on earth, where would you go? To the Grand Canyon . . . the Colorado River Gorge . . . the snow covered Rockies . . . the Pacific Coastal route?

Planning a Walking Field Trip

Now let's return to reality. You're sitting at your desk, trying to plan a Walking Field Trip for your kids. Think of all the places you might visit on foot: a museum, the Post Office, a bank, a farm.

Why Take Walking Field Trips?

Walking Field Trips help children:

- appreciate foot transportation
- discover their community
- gain self-esteem
- burn off fats and sugars
- explore with their five senses
- relax and appreciate exercise

In planning a Walking Field Trip, there is a tendency to worry too much about the site you intend to visit. However, when you consider the potential learning experience of the walk alone, you may realize that where you visit isn't half as important as how you got there, and what you saw along the way. Therefore, the real lesson on a Walking Field Trip is the journey!

So, in planning your field trip, try not to worry about visiting the "Seventh Wonder of the World." Some of the greatest sites your children will ever see are the common, everyday neighborhood things they miss at 30 mph from the smudged windows of a yellow school bus. At 3 mph your children will get to smell the roses that speeding motorists pass by.

Examples of Walking Field Trips

Your school neighborhood can be your greatest resource for a walking field trip. One of the most educational walking field trips you could ever take is to another elementary school to let your children see how other kids learn. Possibly the worst place to visit is a fast-food establishment because such trips encourage poor eating habits.

Great Walking Field Trips

Consider taking your children on:

- **Nature walks around your school**
- **Neighborhood discovery walks**
- **Education walks to other elementary schools**
- **Finance walks to a bank**
- **Community service walks to a senior center, fire station, or police station**
- **Historic walks to a local landmark or museum**
- **Agriculture walks to a farm**
- **"Let's stay healthy" walks to the hospital**
- **Healthy shopping walks to the grocery**
- **Pen-pal letter walks to the post office**
- **Current events walks to your local newspaper or radio/television station**

Two Poor Choices

AVOID taking your children on a walk to:

- **a fast-food establishment***
- **an ice cream or candy shop***

***supports junk food lifestyle**

Reasonable distances (round-trip) for Walking Field Trips

	To start with (miles)	Later in the year (miles)
Kindergarten	½-¾	1-1½
First Grade	¾-1	1½-2
Second Grade	1-1½	2-3
Third Grade	1½-2	3-4

An Example: Visiting Another School

Two first-grade teachers at neighboring schools began an interesting walking project. The idea started with Rita Roberts who thought it would be educational and healthy for her children to walk to another elementary school to share classroom activities.

Rita called her friend, Sue Stevens, a first-grade teacher at North School. After hearing Rita's idea, Sue said, "I love it, and can we visit you next week?"

That day, both teachers took their plans to their principals. Both principals wanted to participate in the walk. So, on a nice sunny morning, Rita, her principal, and 24 little walkers set out for North School. Estimating a 9:20 am arrival, Sue had her children form a reception line in front of North School at 9:15 am. Sue's children had drawn posters that read "Welcome West School Walkers!" When Rita's class arrived Sue's children gave them a round of applause. Then everyone did a "get-acquainted" lap around the school together.

Inside the classroom, Rita's and Sue's classes talked about their discoveries on the morning walk and other school walking projects. Both teachers recorded their children's ideas on chart pads. Both their principals were very impressed! At recess, everyone went outside to play a walking game before lunch.

That day the food service staff made special *Heart Healthy* lunches. After lunch, everyone exchanged names and addresses to start a new pen-pal writing project. This way they agreed to plan their next "school walking field trip." Sue said she would also send letters home to parents inviting them to go on the next walk.

At 2:00 pm, Rita realized that everyone had to get back in time to catch the school bus. She gathered her class together and everyone said goodbye. No one wanted to part company, but at least they knew they'd be visiting again very soon.

As the group left North School, Rita's kids wondered if their legs could carry them all the way back to West School. But as they walked, they talked about all the new friends they'd made and what they had learned that day, and before they knew it, West School was in sight. So ended the fastest school day that year.

And just think, one of these schools could be yours!

A Teacher's Checklist for Walking Field Trips

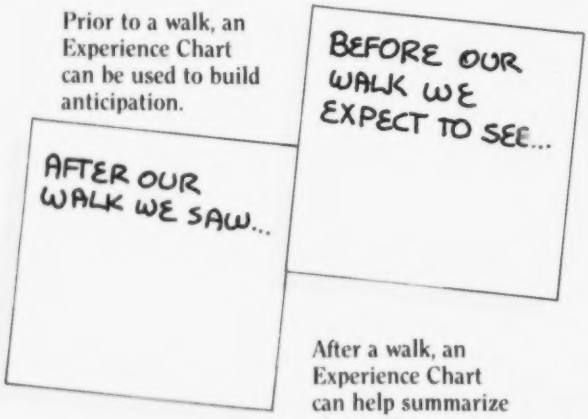
Summarized below are some considerations for planning walking field trips:

- Have you cleared your trip with your administrator?
- Will you need signed parent consent slips?
- Do you have sufficient volunteer chaperones?
- Have you measured the distance of your walk?
- Do you need to walk the route (for safety's sake) beforehand?
- Is the distance reasonable for your children?
- Have you practiced street safety with your class?
- Should your kids walk holding hands in a buddy system?

Experience Charts

By recording all the ideas and observations that your kids discuss on an *Experience Chart* you can help them reinforce their learning experience. Such charts let everyone contribute to the *whole experience*, and the charts allow less observant children to see things they might otherwise miss. Your *Experience Charts* could also help develop language and spelling skills, artistic expression, and a child's understanding of shapes, colors, sizes and spacial relationships.

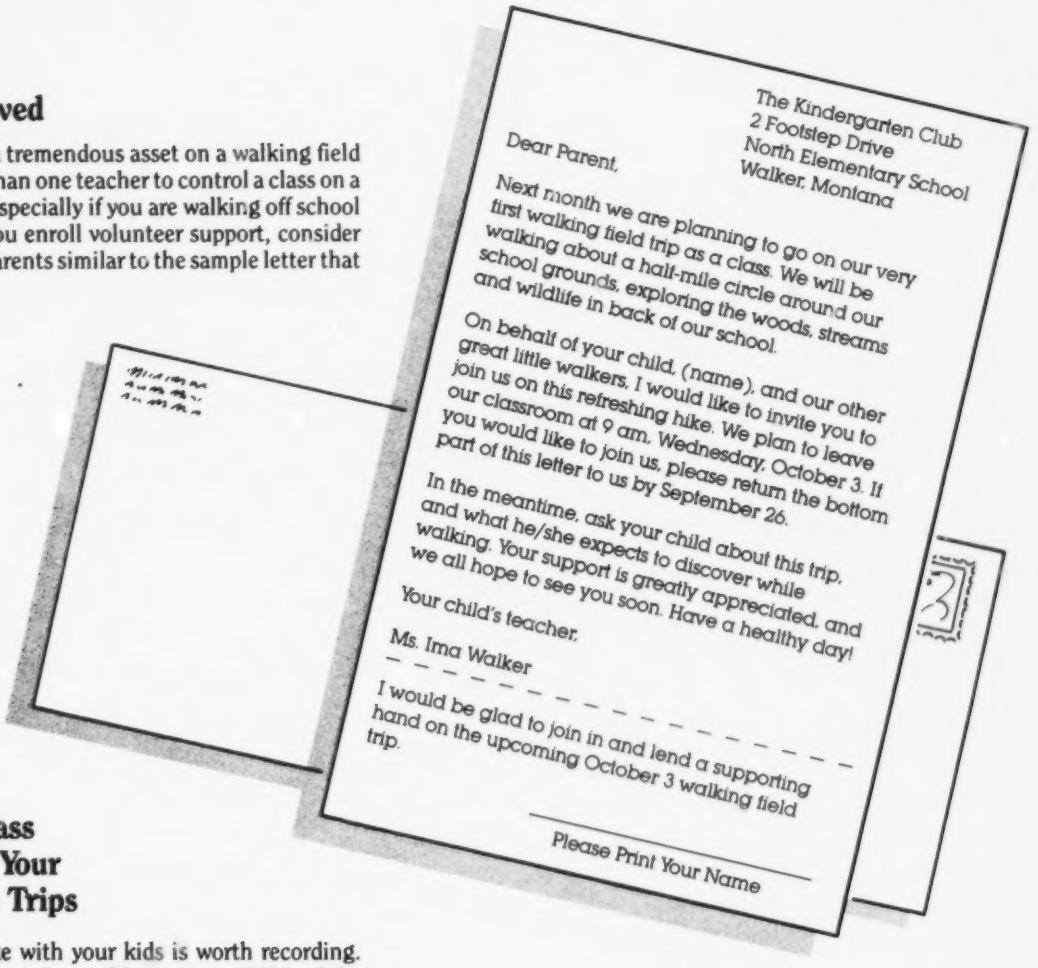
Prior to a walk, an Experience Chart can be used to build anticipation.



After a walk, an Experience Chart can help summarize observations.

Getting Parents Involved

Volunteers can be a tremendous asset on a walking field trip. It takes more than one teacher to control a class on a walking field trip, especially if you are walking off school grounds. To help you enroll volunteer support, consider mailing letters to parents similar to the sample letter that follows.



The Kindergarten Club
2 Footstep Drive
North Elementary School
Walker, Montana

Dear Parent,

Next month we are planning to go on our very first walking field trip as a class. We will be walking about a half-mile circle around our school grounds, exploring the woods, streams and wildlife in back of our school.

On behalf of your child, (name), and our other great little walkers, I would like to invite you to join us on this refreshing hike. We plan to leave our classroom at 9 am, Wednesday, October 3. If you would like to join us, please return the bottom part of this letter to us by September 26.

In the meantime, ask your child about this trip, and what he/she expects to discover while walking. Your support is greatly appreciated, and we all hope to see you soon. Have a healthy day!

Your child's teacher,

Ms. Ima Walker

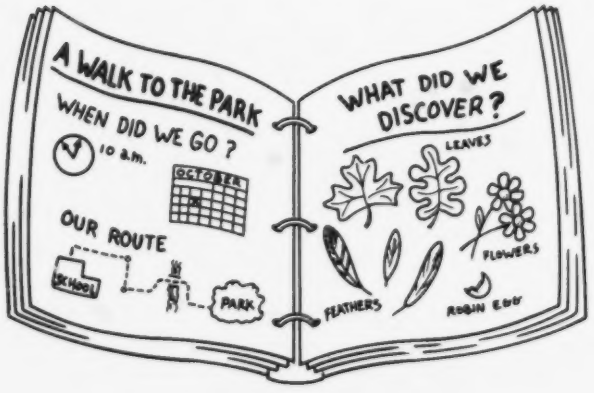
I would be glad to join in and lend a supporting hand on the upcoming October 3 walking field trip.

Please Print Your Name

Keeping a Class Scrapbook of Your Walking Field Trips

Every walk you take with your kids is worth recording. Studies show that we forget fifty percent (50%) of the details of things we see within a half-hour of observing them—unless we record them. That's exactly why it pays to build a scrapbook of your class walks—because months later you can look back through those scrapbook pages with your kids and relive those great walks.

Inside your class scrapbook you could: (1) draw pictures of what you saw on your walks, (2) paste in objects that you found and (3) keep a collection of short stories of your trips.



Our Class Scrapbook Contains:

- poems we wrote on our walks
- letters from our pen-pals
- maps of where we walked
- sketches we drew on our walks
- a list of every place we walked to
- a list of all the people we met
- all our award stickers
- news stories on walking and nutrition
- feathers, leaves and petals of flowers from our nature walks

Building a Class Scrapbook...

- lets children appreciate life's everyday occurrences
- teaches children the value of keeping a diary
- helps you chart progress
- enables you to integrate walking with reading, writing, arts and crafts
- enhances memory skills
- lets you show parents what you have been doing on walks
- helps you plan future lessons

On a nature walk, Ms. Jill Phillips and her children seem to have spotted a bird's nest.

Summary

Walking field trips can turn into valuable lessons in experiential learning. As children explore new and exciting places (sometimes right in their own schoolyard), they gain a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem that competitive exercise does not provide. In completing their walking field trips, your children will also learn that the big tasks in life, such as "long" foot journeys, can be accomplished if you take them one step at a time!

Dennis Whittemore, second grader, and Joanne Witek in The Little Straw Walk.

Photo: Eric Crossan

Fitness

5 Fitness Walking for Children

6 Slow, Medium and Fast Walking

7 The Little Straw Walk

8 Walking Technique

9 Five Minutes for Muscles

5

Fitness Walking for Children

Is walking an adequate physical exercise for children? Some physical educators don't think so. They insist on having their children run for exercise. Despite many complaints from students and parents alike, many schools continue to mandate across-the-board running tests. For some children, running may be inappropriate. Consider an overweight child who has never had any running training. The stresses on that child's legs during a run may have a negative lifetime effect on his musculo-skeletal system.

***Winter Walkers.** Winter does not stop the Fitness Walking program at Fort River Elementary School as Andrew, Sokha, Jeremy, Danielle, Yael, Jessica, Marisha and Daniel take a morning stroll on a frozen field.*

Putting *risk of injury* aside, let's just look at the whole concept of aerobic conditioning. Research tells us that cardiovascular conditioning occurs from sustained, rhythmic exercises during which the heart beats at 60% to 75% of its maximum possible rate for periods of 20 to 40 minutes.

Now, consider this. When most children run a mile, they shoot out of the "starting gate" at speeds that skyrocket their heart rates to 85% to 95% of maximum intensity. Minutes later, they're crippled with side-stitch pains and sore muscles saturated with lactic acid produced by the incomplete combustion of fuel in the absence of sufficient oxygen. So what happens next? These kids start to walk! And at last they begin working their cardiovascular systems in the *aerobic target zone.*

In fact, 3.5 mph walking (a comfortable gait for most adults), easily brings four out of every five K-3 children up to their aerobic target heart rate. The other 20% would need to walk a little faster to reach their target heart rate. Nevertheless, all children can walk aerobically using their large muscles to burn calories while elevating their heart rates to achieve good cardiovascular conditioning. Safely. Painlessly. Enjoyably. Heavens! What more could you ask for in an exercise?

The Value of a Ten-Minute Walk

Many people have the attitude that: "Well, I only have ten spare minutes right now, why bother going outside to walk?" From a physiological and psychological standpoint, even ten-minute walks have value.

Terri Coffin and her first-grade students at Fort River Elementary

Terri Coffin and her students at Fort River Elementary School are finding this out as they take frequent walks before, during, and after school. Often, they walk on recess breaks. This stimulates their fist-sized hearts to pump 120 to 150 times per minute rhythmically for ten straight minutes. Such exercise helps strengthen their hearts and improves their aerobic endurance. Simultaneously, these children are burning off about 40 calories of fat every 10 minutes. That's 30 more calories than they would expend sitting in their chairs! On a yearly basis, 10 extra minutes of daily walking translates to 10,000 fewer calories of stored fat. That's 3 pounds less body fat—per child!

Walking is a great exercise for children because it:

- lets children easily achieve their target heart rates for cardiovascular conditioning.
- is safe and painless.
- is enjoyable, social and easily maintainable.
- helps children burn large supplies of stored body fat without muscle fatigue.
- helps tone muscles in both the upper and lower body.
- promotes strong bone growth during childhood.
- is applicable to all children, regardless of athletic ability.

Setting up a Fitness Walking Program for Your Children

What constitutes a sound fitness walking program for children? How far do they need to walk? At what speed? How many days per week? Are warm-ups and cool-downs necessary? What about the time of day? Is morning better than afternoon? Is it best to walk before or after meals? The answers to these questions will shape the fitness habits of your kids for a lifetime. So, let's explore them.

How Much Walking Should a Child Do?

Anything is better than nothing. Yet, too much too soon causes muscle soreness and loss of enthusiasm. Ideally, little children should gradually work their way up to a mile a day—or 15 to 20 minutes of walking. The Harvard Graduate Study indicates that we should be spending about 1500 to 2500 calories exercising per week to maintain lifelong health. That is equivalent to walking 15 to 25 miles per week. That's a lot for K-3 kids. But, a mile isn't an unreasonable distance, and it allows enough time for a child to experience an aerobic training effect without risk of overuse symptoms.

Fitness Walking Guidelines for Children

- Encourage your kids to walk every day. Even 5- and 10-minute walks have value!
- Do different kinds of walks with your kids—fast, medium, slow, long, short, flatlands, hills, etc.
- Follow your *hard* workout days with *easy* walks.
- Increase the *speed* and *length* of your kids' walks gradually.

Step By Step We Grow Stronger

Many novice walkers risk injury when they jump from quarter-mile walks one week to three-mile walks the next week. Think about it! If you accelerated your walking program that rapidly, you'd be up to 100-mile walks by the year's end. Soon there wouldn't be enough Planet Earth for you to walk on! So ask yourself: "What's the hurry?"

The same idea holds true for kids. If they increased their walks to 3 miles a day by Thanksgiving, what would they do for an encore in the spring? You have an entire school year to get your kids up and walking. Say for example, your students simply increased their walking distance by only 20 yards per day. After all, what's 20 yards of walking? However, after 100 school days of 20-yard increases, your students would be walking 100 x 20 or 2000 yards a day! That's over a mile a day. So, there really is no need to rush! Cardiovascular endurance and leg strength will improve in your kids as they increase the length of their walks—gradually. Moderation is the keystone for developing a sound body and mind without overuse injury and mental burnout.

Seven Days A Week

Walking should be an everyday activity—7 days a week. Walking is not like competitive running or swimming where athletes risk burnout and overuse injuries if they fail to rest several days per week. Even though taking days off from your walking program now and then to rest isn't going to hurt your program, it's just a lot easier to keep the momentum going if you walk every day—even if some days are nothing more than a 10-minute stroll.

Does It Matter How Fast We Walk Our Children?

Some kids like to walk briskly. Others enjoy strolling. The majority are comfortable at a *medium* pace of 3 to 3.5 mph. However we must realize that *fast, medium and slow* are relative terms. What's *slow* for a child who is physically fit may be fast for an overweight one. Ideally, each student should be encouraged to walk in the range of paces that is comfortable for him or her.

Contrary to what many believe, slow, 3 mph walks are beneficial. They burn fat. They help us relax. Plus, they give our bodies the recovery time necessary to push a little harder the next day. The ideal fitness walking program mixes ***slow-long*** walks (low-intensity workouts) with ***fast-short*** walks (high intensity workouts) to produce optimal results.

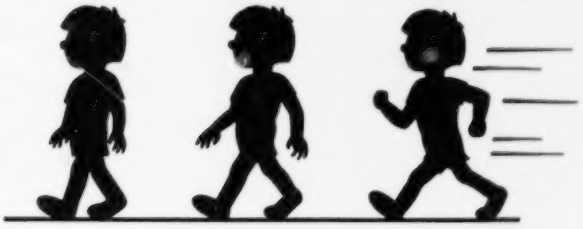
Why Should We Alternate "Hard and Easy" Walking Workouts?

Recovery is critical to success in any fitness walking program. By pushing yourself *hard* one day and working out *easy* the next, your body gets a chance to recover for its next *hard* workout. The best way to judge "hard" and "easy" workouts is by how you feel on the day after your workout: tired and sluggish—or energetic? This is why

competitive athletes listen to their bodies in training as they "push" themselves and then "back off." This technique of training applies to all of us—children included. It's called The Hard-Easy Principle of Training.

Fitness Walking Levels

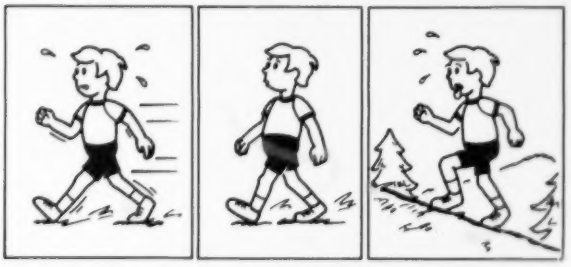
Walking Intensity

Low	Medium	High
		

Application

leisure strolling; relaxation, fun	medium pacing; weight loss	brisk pacing; cardiovascular

Hard-Easy Training

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
		
Hard fast, short walks	**Easy** slow, long walks	**Hard** fast, short walks

Should Kids Take Their Heart Rate After Walking ?

Absolutely! Whether K-1 children can count heart beats or even locate a pulse is irrelevant. With practice, they will learn. In the meantime, you can impress them with the *importance of heart rate response* so that they begin to understand that the little fist-sized muscle buried deep in their chest cavity pumps blood and oxygen for each and every movement of life. And as the work becomes harder, the heart pumps harder. It's analogous to stepping on the gas pedal of a car. Feeling your heart pump is like measuring an engine's RPM (revolutions per minute). Even though they may not know their exact RPM, kindergartners can at least judge whether their "engines" are running *slow, medium* or *fast.*

Finding Your Heart Beat

An easy way for children to measure their pulse is to have them:

Step 1: Place the left thumb squarely in the center of the chin to let the 2nd and 3rd fingers swing gently into place over the carotid artery.

Step 2: Count beats for six seconds starting when you say "Go" and ending when you say "Stop".

Step 3: Add a "0" to your count to find the number of beats per minute.

No. Beats in 6 seconds	Heart Rate (Beats/Min)	Exercise Intensity
6 to 8	60 to 80	At rest
9 to 11	90 to 110	Low-intensity
12 to 15	120 to 150	Mid-intensity
16 to 20	160 to 200	High-intensity

A-B-C Head Start students, Nichole Big Back, Miles Tallbull, Pauline Addison, Grenell and Merlin Killsnight, Angel Barrus and Memory Spotted Elk discover their hearts beating fast after a walk. The North Cheyenne Indian Reservation. Lame Deer, MT.

How To Warm-Up and Cool-Down

Warm-ups let our bodies gradually adjust to increased workload. During a warm-up routine, the heart pumps faster, blood flow and breathing rate increase, the arteries expand, blood pressure rises, and muscles heat up and become more pliable. The opposite occurs as the body cools down and returns to its resting state. Calisthenic-type exercises are ***not*** good warm-up routines because they do not support gradual aerobic acclimation. The overall best single warm-up and cool-down exercises are *slow* walks! They let us go from *first* to *second* to *third* gear, and vice versa, without body shock. Stretching exercises are great to do after a walking warm-up, but stretches alone are an inadequate warm-up.

Easy Warm-Ups

One minute your kids are sitting at their desks with heart rates of 80. A minute later they're up and running around, sweating and panting at heart rates pushing 200. A warm-up is the body's bridge between these two activity states, and it can be this simple:

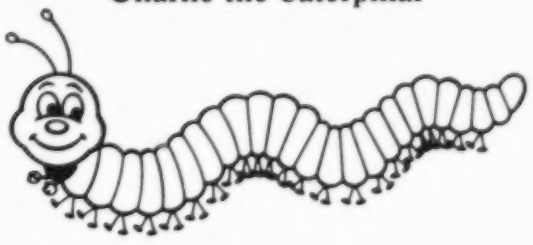
As your kids stand up, have them tuck their chairs neatly under the table, walk slowly to the coat rack and dress for outside. Then have them follow you outside in an orderly procession at a slow 2½ to 3 mph pace. Five minutes of walking around the school yard and they should be ready to "shift into higher gears."

First-graders Lenore Palladino, James Harper and Kate Gagnon practice taking their pulse. Fort River Elementary School.

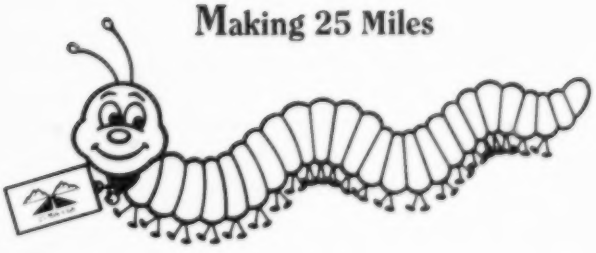
Documenting Your Kids' Progress with Charlie the Caterpillar

How many of your kids can qualify for the *25-mile Club* this year? Charlie the Caterpillar is trying to as he crawls through the sand and earth and up and down trees.

Charlie the Caterpillar



Making 25 Miles



Using Charlie's body for a graph, shade in one section for each mile your children walk. After a child walks 25 miles, he can join Charlie in the 25-Mile Club.

Every time Charlie "walks" a mile, he gets to color one square on his body. As you can see, Charlie has completed ***six*** whole miles so far. Could your children keep pace with Charlie? Maybe if you invited Charlie into your classroom, your kids could "graph" their walking miles on Charlie's body to qualify for a membership in the 25-mile Club.

SUMMARY

Fitness Walking for Children

- Fitness walking is a great rhythmic exercise for producing aerobically fit children.
- Brisk walks are ideal for conditioning the heart. Long, easy-gaited walks burn up fat and help tone muscles.
- The ideal Fitness Walking program combines a variety of slow-long walks with fast-short walks.
- Even 10-minute walks have value. They burn fat and help us think creatively.
- Although little children may have difficulty counting their own pulse, have them do it anyway. It stimulates thinking about how their heart works.
- Effective Fitness Walking programs must be maintained on a regular basis: 5, 6 or 7 times a week over a lifetime . . . not for just one or two weeks of fitness testing.
- Fitness walking is "all gain—no pain." Pain does not have to be part of a child's fitness experience.
- Social interaction and communications are critical components of any children's fitness program; otherwise there will be a high probability of mental burnout. Walking is a very social exercise.

6

Slow, Medium and Fast Walking

Young children come equipped with a 3-speed transmission of slow, medium, and fast gears. Fill their "gas tanks" with sugar-coated cereal and chocolate milk, and off they go from "zero to sixty" in high gear in seconds. A minute later, they're "pooped," sweating and out of breath.

The problem is that children rarely use their "middle" walking gears. It's either a sprint-and-shoving match to the swing set or an evening of potato chips and TV. If we motivate children to dissipate their stored energy evenly through aerobic exercises, then we will be helping them burn fat, control hyperactivity, and strengthen their hearts. Walking in "middle" gear does all of this.

Slow First gear

Medium Second gear

Fast Third gear

Taking Kids Through the Paces

The best way to teach children how to pace themselves is to let them practice walking at different speeds. The average K-3 child understands THREE walking speeds: SLOW, MEDIUM and FAST. Most K-3 kids can walk one mile comfortably in about 24 minutes (2.5 mph pace). For them, 2.5 mph is a relatively slow pace. It's really a child's "first gear."

"Second gear" is a notch up on a child's aerobic scale. Most K-3 children consider a 3 mph pace (20-minute mile) to be a MEDIUM walking pace—one they can maintain comfortably for periods of 20 to 30 straight minutes.

At 3.5 mph, most kids have shifted into "third gear." This is their FAST pace. Yet for most adults, a 3.5 mph walk is a stroll.

A Child's Three-Speed Transmission

A Child's Basic Gears	Speed (mph)	Minutes per mile	For most adults
At Rest (neutral)	0	0	0
SLOW (1st gear)	2.5	24	Very slow
MEDIUM (2nd gear)	3.0	20	Slow
FAST (3rd gear)	3.5	17	Medium

When taking your children on walks, control them at a "reasonable pace" based on the: (1) distance and terrain being covered, (2) purpose of the walk, (3) physical

condition of your kids, and (4) weather. For example, slow your pace down on long walks or on hilly walks. Hills can make 3.0 mph walking seem like a 4.0 mph pace. As you walk along, take note of your kids! Are they sweating? Are they out of breath? Are they staggering? Or, are they just cruising along, smiling in conversation?

The key to successfully pacing your class lies in "reading" your kids and adjusting your pace accordingly. To do this well, we as teachers must have a practical hands-on understanding of what it is like to walk 2.5 mph (a 24-minute mile), 3 mph (a 20-minute mile), and 3.5 mph (a 17-minute mile). The best way to learn these 3 paces is to track the time it takes you to walk a measured distance. For example, if you walked around a 1/10th mile measured course in 2 minutes, your pace would be "20 minutes per mile"—or 3 mph! As you try it, take some mental notes on how this pace feels to you.

Now, speed up a bit and try to walk this same 1/10th mile at 3.5 mph. If you're on target, you'll complete your lap (1/10th mile) in 1 minute and 43 seconds. Do not be surprised if you finish in 1 minute and 30 seconds. As adults, we tend to "over-walk" these children's paces because 3.5 mph is not that fast for us. That's why we need to practice these SLOW, MEDIUM and FAST children's paces.

Practicing Your Pace

How good are you at judging a 2.5 mph, 3 mph, 3.5 mph, or 4 mph walking pace? In about 10 short minutes you can find out. Begin by measuring a 175-yard walking path as described in Chapter 7. You can use small orange cones to define the boundaries of your new walking course. Now, begin timing yourself with a digital watch to see *how close you come* to walking a perfect 2.5-mph lap. If you are right on pace, you'll finish one lap in 2 minutes, 24 seconds (No peeking at your watch—this is the honor system!). Record your time for this 2.5-mph lap under Trial #1 on the chart below. Take as many trials as you want until you feel comfortable with judging a 2.5 mph pace. Then, try walking a 3-mph lap—and so on. In the spaces provided below, record your actual walking times for each lap.

Checking Out Your Pace

	2.5 mph		3.0 mph		3.5 mph	
	your score	perfect score	your score	perfect score	your score	perfect score
Trial 1	____	(2:24)	____	(2:00)	____	(1:43)
Trial 2	____	(2:24)	____	(2:00)	____	(1:43)
Trial 3	____	(2:24)	____	(2:00)	____	(1:43)

As you practice walking at these paces, focus on how your body feels at 2.5 mph, 3.0 mph and 3.5 mph. Pay special attention to your breathing, legs, heart, perspiration rate, comfort and physical stamina. Also, try to imagine how these paces might feel to your kids if they were walking beside you.

Long and Short-Legged Walkers

Would you believe that people with short legs can walk just as fast as people with long legs? They just need to take more steps. Your ultimate walking speed is primarily a function of your aerobic condition (cardiovascular fitness) and walking technique. One of the greatest walkers of all time, Edward Payson Weston, consistently walked 5.0 mph for stretches of 100 miles at a time. He was born (1839) a 4-pound baby, and he grew to be only 5 feet 7 inches tall.

Junior and his teacher both walking 3.5 mph. The difference is that Junior takes 2 short steps for every one taken by his teacher.

A Game For Teachers

If you want to practice your own pacing skills and teach a few of your fellow teachers the same, try this game. First, invite them to walk with you around your 1/10th mile walking course. Before starting out, challenge them to set a 3.5 mph pace around the loop. The team goal is to finish the loop in a perfect lap time of 1 minute and 43 seconds (3.5 mph). As you stroll around the course, listen to how they argue over speeding up and slowing down. Who's listening? Who's doing all the talking? Does democracy prevail? As you finish the loop, call out their lap time. Were you within say 10 seconds of a perfect score? If not, how could you improve as a team? Would you be willing to try this trial-and-error game again? If so, you will soon become an expert at walking 3.5 mph.

After practicing 2.5 mph, 3 mph, and 3.5 mph pacing, your speedometer should be calibrated to enable you to lead your kids at any specific walking pace.

K-3 Walking Summary

Pace	Slow (2.5 mph)	Medium (3 mph)	Fast (3.5 mph)
Time to Walk a Mile:	24 minutes	20 minutes	17 minutes
Expected Heart Rate:	80 to 100 beats/minute	100 to 120 beats/minute	130 to 150 beats/minute
Physical Response:	Easy breathing. Able to talk. Minimal sweating. Minimal muscle fatigue.		Heavier breathing. More difficult to talk. Sweating. Legs muscles may tighten.
Maintain Pace for:	20-30 minutes	15-20 minutes	5-15 minutes
Recommended Frequency:	1 to 2 times per week	2 to 3 times per week	2 to 3 times per week
Best for:	Warming up. Cooling down. Exploratory walks and walking field trips.	Transportation. Walking field trips. Burning up fat. Toning muscles and general relaxation.	Cardiovascular conditioning. Burning up sugars and stored fats. Toning muscles.

Summary

- Young children understand walking in terms of three paces: Slow, Medium and Fast.
- For most K-3 children, walking 2.5 mph is Slow, 3 mph is Medium, and 3.5 mph is Fast.
- The best way to learn these paces is to practice them on a measured walking course.
- Lead your class of children at a variety of paces from Slow to Fast. Slow walks are best for exploration and sensing. Medium ones help burn up fat. Fast walks condition the heart. In general, the slower walks are great for thinking and relaxing. The faster ones are better for aerobic conditioning.
- *ALL* walks are beneficial.

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7

The Little Straw Walk

If you rewarded each of your children with a straw every time they completed a lap of a 1/10th-mile walking course, how many straws could they earn in just six minutes? Three straws? Four straws? Five straws?

***Raylon White Dirt** and **Evelyn High Bull** of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe on their first Little Straw Walk with Rob Sweetgall. Lame Deer, MT.*

Walking briskly, nearly every child will collect three straws. One out of 50 little walkers is fast enough to collect five straws. Some of your competitive kids may try for six straws by sneaking a run when your back is turned. Why? Because it is easier to run six laps than to walk that same distance in six minutes. Your kids will soon discover this and the fact that walking is "real exercise" as they pace themselves in this new fitness walking game which measures and conditions their cardiorespiratory system. The name of this game is ***The Little Straw Walk.***

Objectives

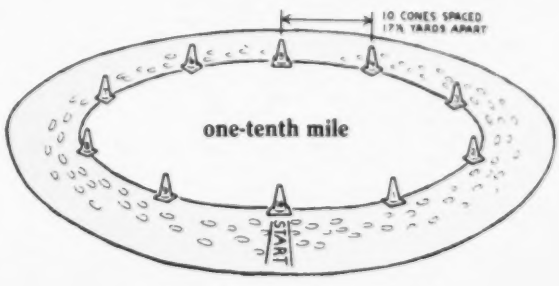
The primary purpose of The Little Straw Walk is to get children moving at their fastest aerobic walking pace for a sustained period of time. The faster one walks, the more straws one will earn. In the process children learn the importance of pacing. Those who shoot out like rockets will burn themselves out quickly on their opening lap. Children who pace themselves properly will do well in the Little Straw Walk. Most K-3 children never experience such aerobic exercise while sprinting 20 yards at a time in games of "tag."

Besides motivating children to walk at an even pace, The Little Straw Walk helps you establish a baseline level of aerobic fitness from which improvements can be measured. For example, Johnny walks 3.5 laps on The Little Straw Walk Course in six minutes in September. His Straw Walk Score would be 3.5, which means Johnny can average 3.5 mph for six minutes. Now, let's assume that by next spring Johnny has cut junk foods out of his diet, lost five pounds, and strengthened his legs—all while building up to 1-mile walks daily. In April Johnny takes another Little Straw Walk, and to his delight he earns four straws. Case in point: Through lifestyle changes and conditioning, Johnny has improved his performance by 14%.

"You might not think a simple little straw would motivate kids to walk for fitness. But it does! The problem is getting them to give you back your straws!"

How to Build Your Little Straw Walk Course

In an open area about half the size of a football field (a playground, a grass field, a running track, an asphalt lot), drop one orange cone to mark your starting point. Then, using a tape measure or a pre-measured string, mark off intervals that are 17½ yards apart. Drop one cone down to mark each segment. Close the loop such that you wind up with 10 equal segments (175 yards around). You have just constructed a 1/10th-mile Little Straw Walk Course!



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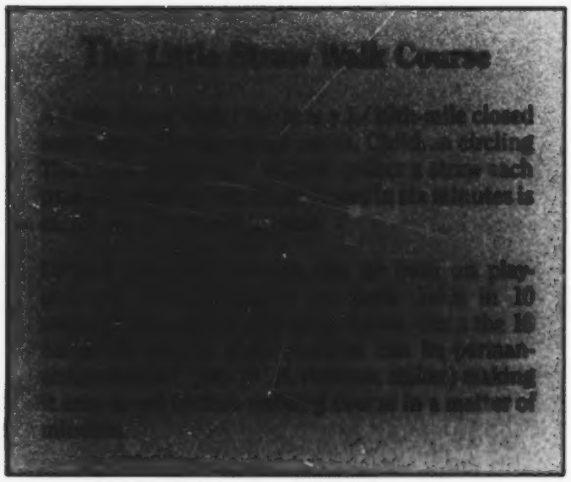
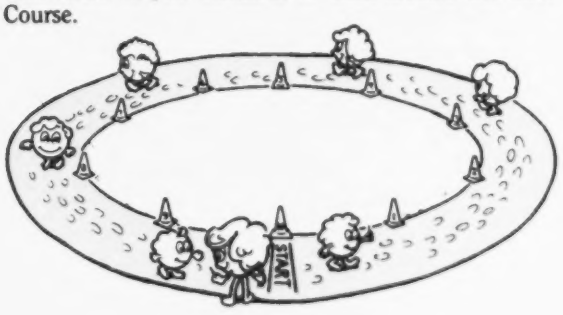


Conducting a Little Straw Walk (LSW) Workshop

To conduct a LSW Workshop, (1) line your kids up at the starting line of the LSW Course, (2) blow a whistle and start your stopwatch, (3) reward your kids with straws each time they complete a lap, (4) blow a final, 6-minute whistle to freeze everyone in place, (5) circle The LSW Course to congratulate your kids, (6) let your kids tell you how they did as you collect their straws and record their LSW scores, and (7) have your class fall in behind you to cool down as you continue to walk around the LSW Course.



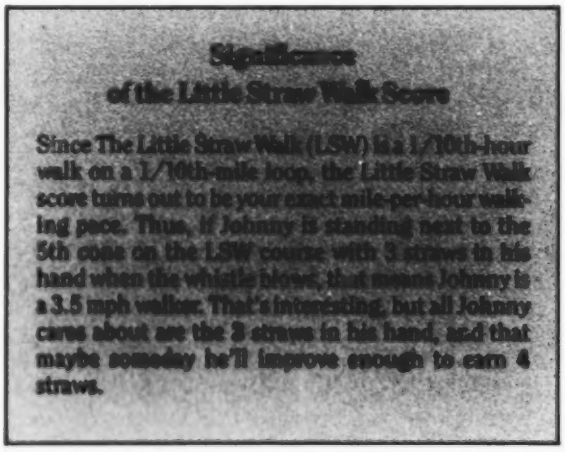
Keeping Score

In order to accurately document your children's improvement, you should record each child's Little Straw Walk score several times this year. You can do this at the end of any LSW by simply counting the number of straws in their hands and adding to that number the fractional distance of their last incomplete lap as shown below:

Number of Straws	Child's Position	Score	
3	Cone 0	3.0	
3	Cone 2	3.2	
3	Cone 4	3.4	
3	Cone 6	3.6	
3	Cone 8	3.8	
4	Cone 0	4.0	
4	Cone 2	4.2	
4	Cone 4	4.4	– and so on!

Tips for Conducting Little Straw Walks

- Invite your children to help you set up your *Little Straw Walk* Course. It will save time and serve as a warm-up for them. It will also familiarize the class with the course.
- If you see some of your kids running during the Little Straw Walk you can (1) warn them (". . . this is a walking exercise!"), (2) withhold their straw for that lap, (3) detain them in a "penalty box," or (4) disqualify them on a "major misconduct."
- To improve their Little Straw Walk performances, children should practice their walking technique, lose excess body fat, eat more nutritiously with less saturated fat in their diet, walk more often, breathe tobacco-free air, learn to pace themselves more effectively, save breath by not talking during the Little Straw Walk, and get plenty of rest the night before the Straw Walk so that they are ready!
- To minimize side-stitch pains in their ribcage area during a Little Straw Walk, warm up sufficiently, pace well at the start, and avoid eating directly before the walk.
- The more encouragement you give to your kids during a Little Straw Walk, the more satisfaction they will derive from this exercise. Straws are good motivators, but sometimes words are necessary too!



Significance of the Little Straw Walk Score

Since The Little Straw Walk (LSW) is a 1/10th-hour walk on a 1/10th-mile loop, the Little Straw Walk score turns out to be your exact mile-per-hour walking pace. Thus, if Johnny is standing next to the 5th cone on the LSW course with 3 straws in his hand when the whistle blows, that means Johnny is a 3.5 mph walker. That's interesting, but all Johnny cares about are the 3 straws in his hand, and that maybe someday he'll improve enough to earn 4 straws.

How Fit Are Your Little Walkers?*

	3 Straws	3½ Straws	4 Straws	4½ Straws	5 Straws
Kindergarten	G	VG	E	O	O
1st Grade	G	VG	E	E	O
2nd Grade	F	G	VG	E	O
3rd Grade	F	G	VG	E	O

F=Fair; VG=Very Good; E=Excellent, O=Outstanding

*Based on K-3 test Scores for the six-minute Little Straw Walk.

Running Versus Walking

Many people do not realize that brisk walking exercises the body as effectively as running. However, in walking one foot is always on the ground. Consequently, the body is not pounded by the crash-landing forces experienced in running. Furthermore, walking exercises more muscle groups than running. That's why it is possible to burn more calories walking a 12-minute mile (5 mph) than jogging a mile at the same pace. If you doubt it, try it!

The problem with running is that not every child is built to run a mile. Most kids who run get painful side-stitches because they've never been taught how to pace themselves properly. During our elementary school days, we were told to run our "fastest mile" as part of our standard fitness tests. Most of us hated these running tests. All they taught us was that fitness was related to pain and competition and that exercise was not fun.

As a test, the "mile run" wastes a large amount of time, too. The "speedsters" finish in 6 minutes while the slower kids drag in 10 minutes later. Thus, in 16 minutes of tests some kids waste 10 minutes watching others struggle to the finish. In The Little Straw Walk, all children are active at their maximum aerobic level for the full time period—and everyone wins straws!

A NOTE ON LEGS: Some teachers feel that children with long legs have an advantage in the Little Straw Walk. If they do, it is almost inconsequential. The TWO most influential factors in effective fitness walking are a child's *cardiorespiratory system* and *walking technique*. Both of these factors improve remarkably with training.

SUMMARY

A. Little Straw Walks can serve as:

- **an energy break**
- **a fitness workout**
- **a pacing lesson**
- **a parent-teacher-student intramural activity**
- **a math lesson**
- **a fitness evaluation**

B. The Little Straw Walk is the best 6 minutes of aerobic exercise your children will ever receive.

C. A child's Little Straw Walk Score is a statement of his aerobic fitness. It also provides a legitimate baseline for measuring future improvements.

D. By improving lifestyle, all children can increase their Little Straw Walk scores and fitness levels.

E. The Little Straw Walk is a maximal-effort exercise. Therefore, avoid vigorous exercises the day after to expedite recovery.

8

Walking Technique

Why teach kids walking posture? Millions of Americans suffer recurring back pains caused by poor walking posture developed in early childhood. We spend about an eighth of our lifetime on our feet. Yet, in all our years of education did we ever receive even one hour of instruction on proper posture? Years are spent studying the conjugations of French and Spanish verbs and the geometry of isosceles triangles. But, how about the geometry of our bodies? How could we ignore a subject like posture which affects a child's skeletal growth for life? At stake here is "The Walking Foundation" that our kids will need for the next 100 million footsteps of their lives!

Q: *Is there a correct way to walk?*

A. *Yes! Note how Anthony walks "heel-toe" with his weight directly over his feet and his arms swinging freely to and fro at his sides.*

What is There to Learn?

Is there one ideal walking technique for children—or should we simply let them walk naturally? Considering how many of us are self-conscious about our walking style, one could argue, "Walk the way you feel like walking. Do what is comfortable!" This point applies to kids too.

"Most of us are content to just be ourselves—walking naturally."

Walking is so simple. We've been doing it since age one. So, is there really anything further we or our children need to learn about "walking technique?" Actually, there is. For example, consider the **Four Points of Posture** which follow. Practicing them can help your kids get off on the right foot in life. What follows is a series of fun exercises and games to help you accomplish this.

Walking Tall: Bean Bag Races

Any child who can balance a bean bag on his head is **Walking Tall**. If he slouches, tilts, or cocks his head, the bean bag will slip to the ground. This is the concept behind Bean Bag Races in which children try to walk balancing bean bags on their heads. The game is played as follows:

With your class divided into two teams (each lined up behind a Start Line), hand the lead child in each line a bean bag. After you blow a whistle, the lead child in each line begins walking to a finish line approximately 15 steps away while balancing a bean bag on his head. The goal is to walk without dropping the bean bag. Upon crossing the finish line, the successful student tosses the bean bag back to his teammate waiting next in line. Any child dropping the bean bag must return to the Start Line. The first team to get all of its "bean-bag walkers" across the Finish Line wins.

Four Points of Walking Posture

1. **WALK TALL without slouching, keeping your weight directly over your feet.**
2. **SWING YOUR ARMS like a pendulum. Arm swinging gives you rhythm, balance and power.**
3. **WALK HEEL-TOE style by landing on the heels, rolling over the balls of the feet, and pushing off on the toes.**
4. **WALK A STRAIGHT LINE so that your feet point in the direction of travel.**

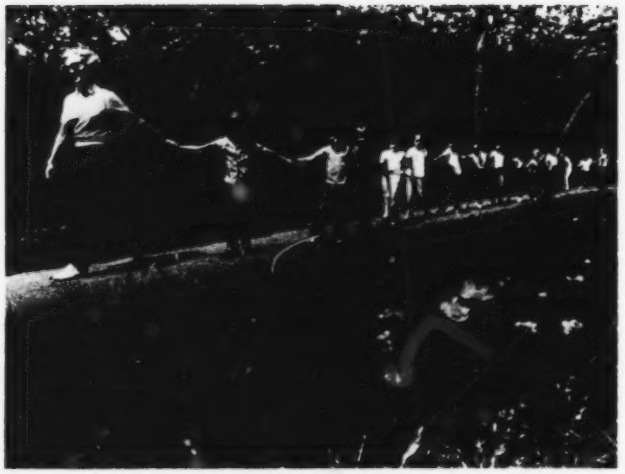
Walking With Arm Swing: Shadow Walking

Many kids walk without ever swinging their arms—unless they need to go faster. Then, they turn into human egg beaters, spraying hands and elbows in all directions. Little do they realize how much walking power is generated from the upper body. The arm swing also adds rhythm and balance to each stride. It helps us burn more calories. Yet a lot of kids think it's "hip" to walk with one or both hands stuffed inside their pockets. If they would swing their arms freely and naturally at their sides, their walking posture would improve significantly. To make your kids more aware of the role of arm-swinging, try playing a game of Walking Shadows! All you will need is a blank wall (for projecting silhouettes), a darkened classroom and a flashlight. As stage director, start by asking each of your kids to walk across the room using proper arm swing. As you focus your flashlight on each walker, ask your seated students to comment on the arm swings of their classmates. After everyone gets a turn at Shadow Walking, turn on the lights and have each child demonstrate proper arm swing.

Suggestion: Before the Shadow Walk, demonstrate a good arm swing to your class: swing your arms at your sides, keeping your elbows tucked in close to your waist. This will help avoid "side sway" arm movement which is wasted energy.

Should Children Hold Hands When Walking?

Should kids walk together holding hands? Actually, it depends on the situation. For example, on walking field trips it may be wise to pair up your kids, hand-in-hand (buddy system) for safety's sake. At other times though, especially on fitness walks, it is better for them to walk unattached with full arm swing.



Ms. Judy Loveland's first graders discover that walking hand-in-hand is a fun way to keep everyone together.

Holding Hands on Walks

Yes	No	
☑	☐	On field trips for safety
☑	☐	When crossing the streets
☑	☐	On get-acquainted walks
☐	☑	When practicing posture
☐	☑	Fitness walks
☐	☑	Weight loss walks*

*Note: By walking hand-in-hand, children receive only half the exercise—and burn only half the calories—compared to walking individually with an energetic arm swing.

Heel-Toe, Rock-n-Roll Walking

Many children scuff their feet into the ground by landing toes first as they walk. It's almost as if they were trying to kill cockroaches as they walk. While some kids may think this is a "hip" way to walk, it's terrible posture. In fact, it can lead to a forward pelvic tilt, low-back strain, toe jamming, poor skeletal development—not to mention blisters. Plus, it's terribly inefficient.

The correct way to walk is heel-toe . . . landing on the heel . . . rolling over the ball of the foot . . . and stepping off on the toes. In a way, it's a kind of "rock-n-roll" foot movement.

Correct: Heel-toe walking **Wrong: Toe-toe shuffling**

Walking Straight: The Puddle Walk

If your students walked through a puddle and left a trail of footprints behind them, think how easy it would be for them to inspect their own foot alignment. This is the whole concept behind a simple game called **The Puddle Walk**. As your kids review their own footsteps, consider quizzing them as follows:

A. How long is your stride?
B. Do you walk with your feet fairly close together?
C. Do your feet "point out" (known as toe-out) or do they "point in" (toe-in)?

Do not be surprised if many of your younger kids show signs of toeing in. Often this results when the inner calf muscles overpower the outer calf muscles. The toelift exercises described in Chapter 9 can help correct this foot misalignment.

Third-graders John, Michael, Mark, Louis, Nuon, Jeff, Maggie, Kevin, Derek, Prentiss, Courtney and Shynia make a trail of footprints in their Puddle Walk (Fort River Elementary School).

The Line Walk

"Line Walking" is another simple exercise that will help kids walk straight. Here they are challenged to walk on a 4-inch wide paint stripe. The object is to "walk the line" without falling off. Ideally, both feet should point straight ahead and nip the edges of the line. Students will be most successful if they keep their heads up while maintaining normal walking speeds.*

Kindergartner Aslam Amdur balances himself perfectly as he walks the line—straight on target.

*Suggestion: It is very difficult to demonstrate good walking posture at slow speeds—like riding a bike at 3 miles per hour. You feel as if you're going to tip over. Yet, at 10-15 mph bikes are easy to balance. The same is true for walking. Your children will find it easy to walk with good posture if they step up the pace.

"If you can't walk a straight line, I'll give you a month to practice."

The Tunnel Walk

After having your kids form a narrow "Human Tunnel," challenge them to walk a straight path right down the center of the tunnel. As "tunnel walkers" arrive at the far end of the tunnel, they assume their new position in line. This way, the tunnel keeps drifting in the direction of travel.

Third grader Louis Jacobs watches out of the corner of his eye, trying not to scrape the side of this human tunnel.

Video Filming

If your school has access to video equipment, consider video taping your children as they demonstrate their best walking posture. As a follow-up, play this walking video tape in the classroom on TV as part of a lesson on "How We Walk." Such a creative video workshop will do more than improve posture. Seeing oneself on television is a great way to build a child's confidence and self-esteem.

The Railroad Line Walk. Attiya Mubdi-Bey walks a straight line on an abandoned railroad track along the Brandywine River.

Reinforcement

Good walking posture cannot be taught to a child as part of a three-week crash course. Posture is learned through experience and continuing reinforcement. Rather than devoting several weeks to concentrated Line Walks, Shadow Walks, Puddle Walks and Tunnel Walks, keep playing these games with your children all year long—five minutes here and five minutes there. With such reinforcement your children will have a much greater chance of permanently adopting good walking posture.

An Exercise for Teachers

One of the best ways to improve your own walking posture is to have someone else observe you as you walk. An "Observer" can check your: (1) foot alignment (straight versus crooked), (2) erectness (walking tall versus slouched), (3) arm swing and (4) heel-toe motion. After being critiqued on your posture, switch roles so that you become the "Observer."

You can also take this "Walker/Observer" exercise into the classroom by setting up a "buddy system" for your kids to critique each other. Before you know it, your kids may be doing this exercise with their parents.

Parent Support

Another way to reinforce good walking posture is to invite parents to participate in their children's Walking Clinics as outlined in the following sample letter:

The Elementary Walkers Club
2 Footstep Drive
Healthy Trails, Oregon 99777

Dear Parent:

This year your child is learning important walking techniques that will help improve his/her posture for the rest of his/her life. For example, in class we are now practicing how to walk tall without slouching and how to swing our arms properly.

To see how far your child has progressed, you might check his/her walking posture at home by asking him/her to demonstrate how to walk properly. You can even demonstrate your own walking style and have your child critique you.

To learn about WALKING TECHNIQUE, please feel free to join us on our next OUTDOOR WALKING CLINIC. It will start at 10 am on October 15th and last 30 minutes. We'd love to have you walk with us.

We all look forward to seeing you soon.

Your child's teacher,

Ima Walker

Yes, I will be attending your walking clinic on October 15th. _____

9

Five Minutes For Muscles

Many Americans spend hours at fitness clubs pumping iron and staring into mirrors. How this relates to ***health***, I'm not quite sure. It's true that toned muscles are important. They stabilize our joints and control our posture. Every day we depend on our muscles to sit and stand, to walk, talk, and eat, to lift objects, to breathe, and even to read. Without good muscle tone we're more vulnerable to disabling injuries such as sprains, strains, pulls and tears.

However, none of us need to be body builders. About five minutes a day of muscle toning workouts will suffice for most children in their developmental years. That's 5 minutes more muscle exercise than many students do today anyway. Most important is how we ***balance*** and ***tone*** our muscles—and not how strong we become.

Summarized in this chapter are 7 valuable muscle exercises for children. They focus on ***stretching*** and ***strengthening*** muscles critical for good posture and efficient body movement. By doing these exercises just a few minutes a day, your kids will develop firmer stomachs, legs and healthier backs.

Teachers Too! The 7 exercises that follow apply equally to adults. By doing them with your kids, you too will find yourself with a firmer body several months down the road.

"Stomach Curls" for Firm Abdominals

About eighty percent (80%) of our adult population suffers from back pain at least once in their life. This problem begins when weak abdominal muscles are overpowered by the back muscles. Forward pelvic tilt results, causing spinal column misalignment, strain and disabling back injury.

The best remedy for reducing pelvic tilt is to strengthen the weaker stomach muscles through "stomach curl" sit-ups. Here, the lower back is pressed to the floor by tilting the hips backward and tightening the abdominal muscles. Unlike the "bent-knee" sit up, stomach curls do not overstress and rub the lower spine. They also do a better job of isolating and strengthening the abdominal muscles than the old bent-knee sit-up.

Jessica and Sam demonstrate stomach curls by criss-crossing their arms on their chest and lifting their upper body 6 to 10 inches off the floor. Their eyes focus straight up on the ceiling as they exhale during upward movement to minimize the peak rise in blood pressure. Jessica and Sam hold the position for 2 seconds before lowering to the floor as they inhale for their next curl. For children and adults, 10 to 15 repetitions is sufficient.

Unfortunately, many schools still use the old-style bent-knee sit-up method for strengthening abdominal muscles which has kids yanking away at their necks with their hands clasped behind their heads. This type of sit-up can injure the cervical region of the neck—especially when we encourage children to do as many "neck-yanks" as possible in a one-minute sit-up test. Instead of testing kids this way, we should be teaching them to gradually increase their repetitions of stomach curls. Five curls in the morning and five curls at night produce the same strengthening effect as doing ten at one time.

"Straight-Leg Crosses" for Firm Thighs

Walking helps firm the thighs. So do "Straight-Leg Crosses" (see opposite page)! In fact, straight-leg crosses even help tone the lower abdominals. Leg crosses are great for walkers because they help strengthen the front of the thigh (quadricep muscles) which is critical for walking and stabilizing the knee joint.

Legs crosses are convenient to do in a seated position simply by crossing one ankle over the other. Hold this position, tightening the quadricep muscles for *2* seconds while breathing normally. Keep reversing the leg positions approximately 10 times (a 90-second workout).

Anyone can do sets of straight-leg crosses and stomach curls while watching TV. Both can be done in the time span of a double commercial. Besides toning muscles, these exercises will increase your TV-metabolism. For instance, sitting still in front of the screen you burn about 1 calorie per minute. By doing these exercises, you increase your metabolism to about 1½ calories per minute. The net effect of this could easily be ***one pound more muscle*** and ***one pound less fat*** at the end of the year!

Straight leg crosses can be done on a chair, couch, bench, or even on a playground turtle.

The bottom leg always supports the top leg. You can prove this to your class by having them feel the difference in tension in their upper and lower thighs.

Footnote: The Truth About Cellulite

Cellulite is one of the most misused terms in the English language. Everone thinks of cellulite as the unsightly area of rippled skin that makes your thighs bounce like a bowl of jello in an earthquake. But only *Superman* can see cellulite with his X-ray vision, because cellulite is really stored beneath the skin's surface. The skin's dimpled appearance is only the outer bulges of the skin conforming to uneven layers of fat cells that sit between the thigh muscle and the outer epidermis. Since our fat cells never disappear, cellulite never disappears. However, the "rippling" appearance of the skin can be reduced by: (1) decreasing the amounts of fat stored in our fat cells, (2) toning up the supportive tissue beneath these fat cells. Walking consistently and following the exercise prescriptions in Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of this resource guide will help you accomplish this.

Stretching the Thighs and Hamstrings

Running, walking and biking produce stronger, tighter leg muscles. Failing to stretch these muscles can result in significant flexibility loss which ultimately will limit the ***range of motion*** of joints, increasing our chances of straining or tearing muscle tissues. The front and back thigh muscles (quadriceps and hamstrings respectively) are particularly vulnerable since they are the largest muscles in the human body. They work very hard in every step we take. By stretching these muscles daily, we will stay flexible and comfortable, enabling us to take long strides without tightening.

Second-graders Jennifer, Chhoeuth and Sara gently press on their right hips while holding steady for 20 seconds to stretch their inner thigh muscles.

Stretching the front of the thigh. Daniel and Jennifer gently clasp their insteps (right hand to left foot) while balancing against each other. They hold the position for 20 seconds (no yanking!) before reversing their positions.

Stretching the hamstrings. Sara, Regina and Jason gently reach forward, stretching as far as reasonably comfortable. They hold their outstretched position for 15-20 seconds before relaxing.

Stretching the Calf Muscles

Calf muscles become particularly tight from climbing hills, and running or walking long distances. "Hugging a tree" (see photograph) is a most effective way to stretch tight calves.

Toe Raises: Developing the calf muscles. Maria, Lindsay, David, Charles, Loren and Robin raise up on their toes, holding their heels off the ground for a two-count. Then, they drop their heels to the ground. Ten repetitions are sufficient.

Strengthening the Calf Muscles

Many preschoolers and kindergartners walk with their feet toed-in. This crooked foot placement occurs when strong ***inner*** calf muscles overpower the weak ***outer*** calf muscles. By doing simple toe raises, the outer calf muscles will be strengthened, helping to modify toe-in (pigeon-toe) problems.

The Tree Hug: Stretching the calf muscles. By angling her feet up the base of a tree, Allison stretches her calves.

A Final Foot Note

There are literally hundreds of exercises to stretch [illegible] muscles, connective tissues and bones. This chapter focuses on workouts for the most critical areas: the stomach muscles (controlling posture), [illegible] thighs, hamstrings and calves (controlling knee extension/flexion and walking gait). Many [illegible] muscle groups have not been discussed here. If you are concerned about exercising them also, do not worry! Walking gets the rest of them!

K-2 Winter Walkers: Andrew, Amy, Sokha, Natavy, Daniel, Marisha, Yael, Andrew, Jessica, Danielle and Jeremy.

Photo: Eric Crossan

Health

10 Nutrition and Walking

11 Tobaccoless Road

12 A Healthy Day in Animal Kingdom

10
Nutrition and Walking

Today, most children are growing up on diets of french fries, pizza, hamburgers, milkshakes, potato chips, cookies, chocolate and fast-food fat while watching television at a metabolic rate of one calorie per minute. Consequently, obesity, high cholesterol and high blood pressure are becoming widespread in pre-kindergartners. Meanwhile, the fast-food industry continues to make its killing.

Our nation has a major health problem! As the richest country in the world, we have one of the poorest diets on the face of the Earth. Many primitive tribes eat healthier than we do, and their heart disease history proves it.

Starting Young

Preschool-kindergarten is the time to start teaching nutrition. If we don't, organizations like McDonalds and Burger King will continue to do the training for us. Consider one elementary teacher who asked her kids to name *ONE* historic site appropriate for a walking field trip. The only place her children could identify was McDonalds!

Still there is hope. The accompanying United Press International news story shows that teachers can make a difference! But to have impact on our kids, it's going to take a lot more than classroom teaching. Principals must be willing to stop candy-sale fund raisers. Food service staff will need to market creative healthy-heart menus. And parents will need to support your teachings at the dinner table. In total, it will take a cooperative networking of parents, teachers, administrators, nurses and school nutritionists so that children receive consistent messages about nutrition and wellness in general. In the workshop exercises that follow, think about how everyone in your school and the family unit could interact on projects to reinforce lifelong health eating habits.

McDonald's protest

AUSTIN, Texas — Responding to letters from schoolchildren, state Attorney General Jim Mattox yesterday asked the McDonald's chain to drop a national advertising claim that its food is nutritious.

Mattox said a group of Houston-area students studying nutrition started a campaign against fatty, salty meals from the nation's largest fast-food chain.

The attorney general warned McDonald's president Ed Rensi that future ads that claim McDonald's food is nutritious will be considered violations of Texas' consumer protection laws.

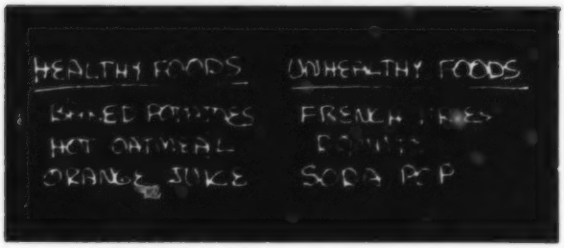
United Press International

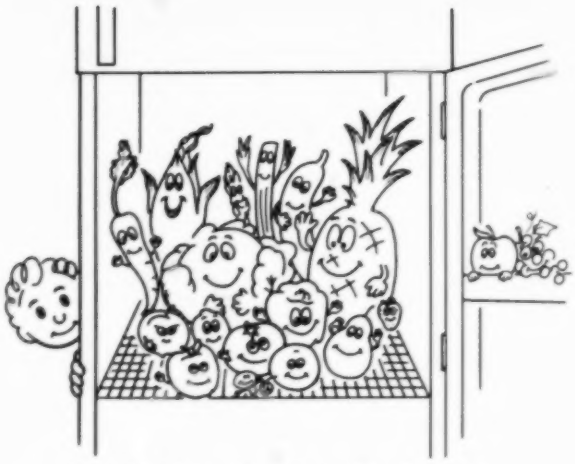
Project #1:
Let's Walk and Talk About Food

On a pleasant day, take your children out on a relaxing stroll to talk about nutrition. As you walk, discuss the differences between the foods shown under Column A versus their counterparts in Column B. For example, ask your class: "Why is popcorn a better snack than M&M's?" Discuss with your kids which foods have more ***fat, cholesterol, calories, salt*** and ***sugar***—and which foods have more ***essential nutrients***.

COLUMN A	COLUMN B
baked potato	french fries
popcorn	M&Ms
apple	apple pie
broiled chicken	fried chicken
broiled fish	fried fish
banana	banana split
hot oatmeal	bacon
lowfat milk	whole milk
raw peaches	peaches in syrup
watermelon	ice cream
strawberries	potato chips
whole wheat bread	white bread
raw carrots	carrot cake
garden salad	hamburger
club soda	cola
orange juice	orange drink
iced lemon water	milkshake

Back in the classroom, record on experience charts the healthy and unhealthy foods discussed on your walk. As a follow-up homework assignment, have your kids bring in labels and pictures of both healthy and unhealthy foods. With your children, paste these labels onto your experience charts and hang them in your classroom as reminders of "good and poor" nutrition. Keep adding food items and labels to each chart as the year progresses.





Open the door—there's good food galore!

Project #2: Visiting the School Cafeteria

All schools can control their own nutritional destiny! After all, who is forcing us to serve donuts, frankfurters, chocolate milk and french fries to our kids? Some schools have taken nutrition seriously enough to say, "We're not going to serve junk food anymore." So, out goes the junk food. The next thing you know the kids have stopped eating! Yet, this project might have been successful if your children were made part of the decision-making process. So, ask yourself, "How could my kids feel a sense of ownership in planning their diets?" Some schools now let their students help plan school cafeteria meals based on what they learn about nutrition in the classroom.

To start such a project, consider taking your class on a walk through your school cafeteria. As you pass by the menu selections, discuss the pros and cons of various items. On returning to class, record everybody's ideas on a chart pad. Can your class come up with recommendations for improving the day's menu? Would your food service staff be willing to meet briefly with your class to discuss "Nutritious Food Planning in Our Cafeteria?" What good ideas does your food service staff have about improving the menu? Could everyone together (cafeteria personnel, district nutritionist, you and your class) come up with a simple action plan to change just ***ONE*** item on the menu? Could you take this project one step further by composing a class proposal letter to your principal and your PTA expressing your concerns and recommendations? Remember, healthy food costs no more than unhealthy food!

Project #3: The Fresh Salad Workshop

Picture the healthiest, prettiest mini-salad bar set up in the middle of your classroom. Now think about how much your kids could learn by building it from scratch. In the Fresh Salad Workshop that follows, your kids will get to: (1) prepare a shopping list, (2) walk to the supermarket, (3) select raw vegetables from the produce shelves, (4) compute a shopping budget, (5) share carrying groceries back to school, (6) witness salad bar preparations, and (7) discover that meals can be something other than fast-food fats and sugary chemicals.

Step 1: Preparing a Shopping List. First inform your class that they will be going on a walking field trip to the grocery store to buy fresh vegetables for a salad bar party to be held in your classroom. Ask your kids how much money they think it will take to build a nice salad bar (actually, for about $3 you can buy enough veggies for a class of 20 to 25 kids). After hearing their cost estimates, start preparing a shopping list in class with your kids while discussing:

- What are the healthiest vegetables for a salad?
- What vegetables are in season?
- Should we buy different color vegetables for our salad bar?
- What healthy toppings could we use on our salad? (HINT: try lemon)
- How much food will we need?
- How much will our salad cost?
- How will we carry everything back to school?
- How are we going to behave in the supermarket?

To enhance the learning experience, think about how you can bring ***colors, food varieties*** and ***budgeting*** together in one integrated lesson.

Building a Salad Bar

Food	Color	Cost
2 tomatoes	Red	40¢
1 cucumber	Green	35
2 carrots	Orange	15
5 mushrooms	White	15
1 lettuce head	Green	95
1 zucchini	Yellow	30
1 cabbage head	Purple	35
2 lemons (dressing)	Yellow	20
How many colors are in our salad?		$2.85

FACT: A more colorful salad means a more nutritious meal! That's right! The greater the variety of colors on your salad dinner plate, the greater the variety of vitamins and minerals in your meal!

Step 2: Walking to the Supermarket. Hopefully, your school will be within walking distance of a supermarket. If not, consider busing part way to a shopping center—or setting up a vegetable stand in your schoolyard with the help of interested parents.

Step 3: At the Supermarket: Imagine what your kids could learn in the produce aisle about: (1) selecting quality vegetables, (2) the nutritional contents of various vegetables, (3) buying the right size portions, and (4) not touching and squeezing everything in sight! As you place each vegetable item in your cart, check it off on your shopping list.

Step 4: At the Cash Register. Look at how much each item costs. Some vegetables are weighed for pricing, while others are priced per item. What would you do if your shopping bill exceeded your $3 budget?

Step 5: Preparing to Leave the Supermarket. How are groceries bagged to prevent damage? How can everyone help carry something? What does the cash register attendant say when you leave? Should you walk fast or slow when carrying groceries?

Step 6: Back at School—Salad Preparation. Now it's time to play Julia Child for your class. If you can simply impress your children with the fact that salads are *fun* to prepare and *scrumptious* to eat, then this exercise will have been a success! As part of your salad preparation, demonstrate how: (1) hands are washed before handling food, (2) vegetables are washed, (3) knives are handled, (4) foods get sliced and diced, (5) different vegetables can be arranged in a decorative salad.
SUGGESTION: Instead of preparing individual dishes of each food item, consider making one large salad platter from which you can serve your kids.

Step 7: Tasting the Salad. By now your kids' salivary glands should be flowing. It's taste time! For sanitary health reasons, consider distributing mini-portions of salad on individual paper plates.

Step 8: Summarizing the Lesson. As your children eat their salads, you can point out: (1) how to chew food thoroughly, (2) manners with forks, knives and napkins, (3) the nutritional value of each food, (4) the taste differences for each food, (5) the way each food is grown and harvested, and (6) why fresh salads are healthier than fast-food meals. Ask your children if they could prepare a similar salad bar with their parents for dinner at home.

Fresh Salads Versus Fast-Food Meals

Most fast-food restaurants:
- Deep fry foods in saturated animal fats
- Coat their vegetables with chemical preservatives
- Serve high-fat, high-sodium, high-calorie, low-nutrient meals

Fresh salads are:
- Low in fat
- Rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber
- Good tasting and low in calories
- Inexpensive and fun to make

Project #4: The Walking Calories Game

How far would a child need to walk to burn off the number of calories contained in ***ONE*** M&M candy? Hint: One M&M contains 6 calories. Most small children burn 4 calories per minute walking at a medium speed. Thus, in walking once around the Little Straw Walk Course (1.5 minutes), a child burns up ***ONE*** M&M.

Now, picture your kids walking outside, holding plastic baggies containing a variety of snacks. Imagine them munching away, trying to decide how far to walk to burn off the calories contained in each of these foods. This is the strategy behind the ***Walking Calories*** game where children learn about open-mouth consciousness and controlling their weight. Here's how the game works:

After assembling outside the Little Straw Walk Course, divide your class into ***five*** teams: ***The Apples, The Carrots, The Celery Stalks, The Almond Nuts,*** and ***The M&Ms***. Give each of your children one "Snack-Pack Baggie" containing a slice of apple, carrot, and celery—plus one almond and one M&M. As you distribute the bags, ask your kids to inspect the contents without opening the bags. Next bring The Apple Team to the front of the class, and ask them how far they need to walk to burn off the number of calories contained in their apple slices. At this point, The Apples should begin walking while discussing this question. Everyone in the class should tag along right behind The Apples. All kids can eat their slices of apple as they walk. When The Apples think they've burned off their slice of an apple, they should stop, turn to their classmates and explain the reasoning behind their decision. After this discussion, you can give the ***correct answer***.

Juan-Pablo Mas and Daniel Roth wonder how far they'll need to walk to burn the calories in one M&M.

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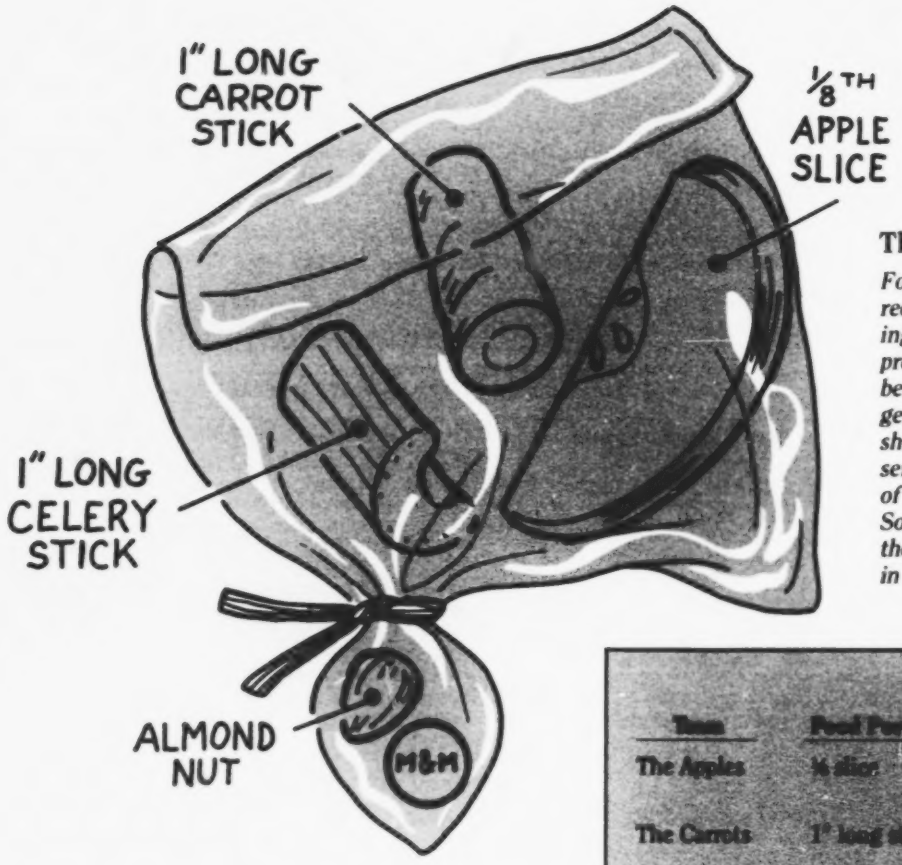
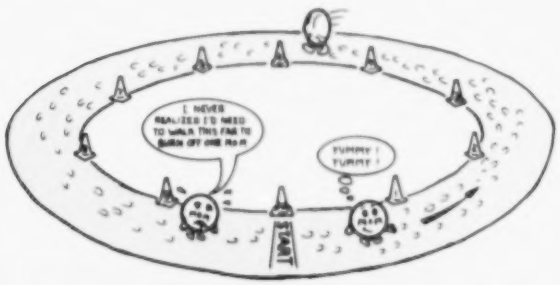


The Snack Pack

For health reasons, it is recommended that the Walking Calorie Snacks Packs be prepared by school staff members (or parents) and refrigerated prior to the workshop. In many schools, food service staff does a great job of catering this workshop. Some teachers even invite the service staff to participate in the Walking Calorie Game!

From the point where The Apples decided to end their walk, you can now ask The Carrot Team to step forward to lead the class on a Carrot Walk. Once again, The Carrots will be trying to figure out how far to walk to burn up a 1" carrot stick. Everybody gets to walk... and everybody gets to eat their carrot. Proceed with all the food items this way, until each of your five teams has had a chance to "walk off" their particular food item.

Team	Food Portion	Calories	Walking Required
The Apples	⅛ slice	8	1 ½ laps
The Carrots	1" long stick	3	1/2 lap
The Celery Stalks	1" long stick	1	1/6 lap
The Almond Nuts	1 nut	6	1 lap
The M&Ms	1 M&M	6	1 lap



Example: A medium-sized apple contains 64 calories. Thus 1/8th of an apple contains 8 calories. Since an average child burns about 6 calories while walking a lap of the Little Straw Walk Course, walking one and a third times around this course burns the equivalent of the apple slice. That's approximately ***TWO*** minutes of walking.

Follow-up Questions

Q. To burn up a Big Mac, fries and a milkshake, how far would a child walk?

A. Five hours! The above treat contains 1200 calories—mostly saturated animal fat and sugar.

Q. Why are fruits and vegetables less fattening?

A. They contain 80% to 95% water. Water has ***no*** calories. Plus, fruits and vegetables are high in nutrients and fiber, and low in fat.

Q. Is it better to eat the M&M ***before*** the stick of celery?

A. Yes. The celery will clean the teeth like dental floss!

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Project #5: Planning a Nutritious Party

If you let your children plan their own nutritious party this school year, imagine all the opportunities that could arise to reinforce good habits in the classroom. For instance, your kids could vote on which foods (healthy versus unhealthy) to accept for the party. These decisions could be posted on a chart pad. As their "approved" list grows, you can start compiling a listing of all the vitamins and minerals that will be served at the party. And by party time in May, your kids will have had dozens of mini-, five-minute nutritional workshops.

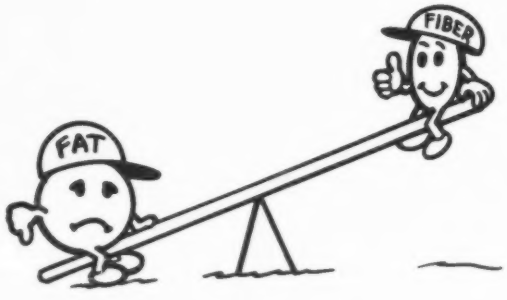
In addition, you can start talking to your kids about who's going to pay for this party. In the Piggy Bank Game (Chapter 16) a suggestion is made to have your kids collect all the loose coins they find while walking—and to put those saved coins into a class Piggy Bank fund to support a nutritious party at the year end. This gives kids a year-long opportunity to plan a nutritious party menu while learning about how to count money and follow a budget plan!

Food for Thought

Nutrition should not be taught as a 3-week crash course. Rather, it should be reinforced throughout the entire school year. That's why McDonald's advertises all year long! By introducing projects like The Piggy Bank Game, you can teach children nutritious food planning ***continuously*** from September to June. And considering the extent of childhood obesity and high cholesterol levels today, perhaps we ought to be presenting five-minute nutritional workshops every day.

Fiber and Fat

The American diet suffers from **too much fat** and **too little fiber**. Fatty foods are generally low in fiber. Most high-fiber foods are low in fat. Consequently kids could make great nutritional strides simply by decreasing their fatty food consumption. Review the Fiber-Fat chart below and ask yourself how to balance your kids' diets to include ***more fiber*** and ***less fat***. Could you draw a see-saw on your blackboard on which rests more high fiber and less high fat foods?



Increase Fiber

Food	Fiber Grams
wheat bread slice	1
bran muffin	2
cup spaghetti	2
cup Wheaties	3
banana	3
apple	4
oz shredded wheat	4
cup brown rice	5
ear corn	5
cup peas	7
cup blackberries	8
cup raspberries	9
cup lima beans	16
cup all bran	24

Decrease Fat

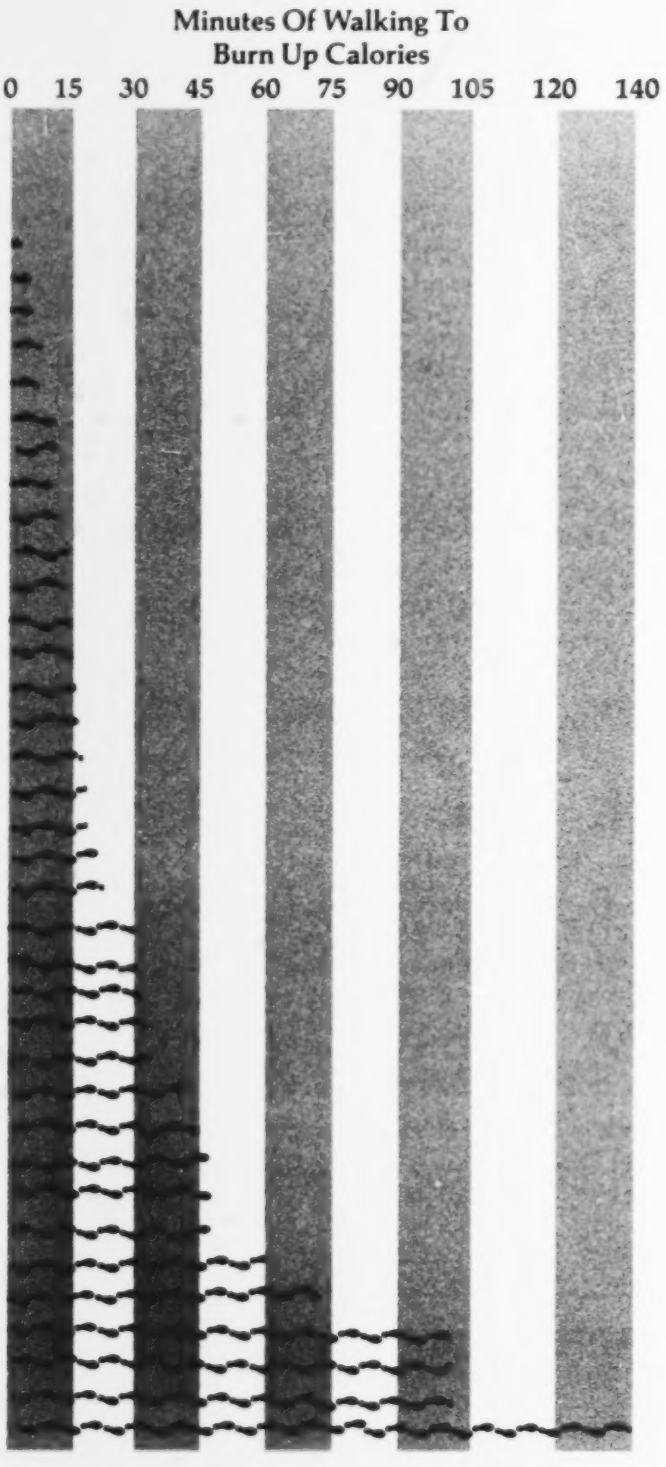
Food	Fat Grams
cup 1% milk	1
cup yogurt	5
granola bar	5
slice pizza	6
cup whole milk	8
oz cold cuts	8
oz potato chips	10
frankfurter	10
fried chicken	20
cup ice cream	25
fried fish sandwich	30
Big Mac/Whopper	30
slice cheesecake	35

Nutrition Summary

- Breakfast is our most vital meal because it provides the "fuel" needed to run our engines for the rest of the day. Many typical breakfast foods such as bacon, sausage, "kiddie cereals," and chocolate milk are loaded with fat, sodium, and sugar. Fruits, whole grain bread, low-sugar cereal, and skim milk are much healthier choices.
- Candy bars give you quick energy that never lasts. Fresh fruits, such as apples, help you maintain sufficient blood-sugar levels for long-lasting energy.
- Slow walking after dinner can aid digestion.
- The best way to burn up fat is through walking and eating sensibly—and ***not*** by crash dieting. Thirty minutes a day of walking burns 40,000 calories of fat in a year. That's equivalent to a 15-pound weight loss.
- Fatty foods are fattening foods. French fries, chocolate, ice cream, cookies and cakes are high fat foods. It takes ***five hours*** of walking for a child to burn off a Big Mac, large fries, and a shake!
- Most Americans eat from a menu of ***ten*** basic meals, day after day. Ten varieties of food ***do not*** constitute a balanced diet. Vitamin pills are no substitute for a well-balanced diet.
- Natural food contains all the salt necessary in our diets. Too much salt causes high blood pressure. Most Americans consume 18 to 20 grams of salt per day. All we really need is 2 to 3 grams (½ teaspoon).
- Water is our most important nutrient.

The Walking Calories Chart†

Food Item	Total Calories
water	0
12 oz. club soda	1
1 cup lettuce	10
1 cup raw spinach	15
sm. cucumber	25
1 cup string beans	30
1 cup watermelon	40
1 cup popcorn	40
½ canteloupe	50
1 oatmeal cookie	50
1 tbs maple syrup	50*
slice bread	65
1 orange	75
1 cup grapes	75
1 tbs peanut butter	95
1 fried egg	100
med. banana	100
slice American cheese	105
1 cup orange juice	115
1 cup apple juice	115
1 cup cooked peas	115
slice buttered bread	125
1 cup hot oatmeal	130
12 oz. cola	150*
1 cup wild rice	150
1 cup whole milk	160
med. baked potato (plain)	170
12 oz. beer*	180
½ cup raisins	210
slice pizza*	225
1 cup ice cream*	250
slice apple pie*	250
1 choc. candy bar*	250
lg. french fries*	300
med. fast food burger*	360
2 pc. crispy fried chicken*	500
1 fast food fried fish sand.*	500
1 slice pie ala mode*	500
1 extra thick shake*	700



*Poor diet choice due to either high sugar, high salt (sodium), high fat or alcohol content.

†Caloric values based primarily on USDA Agricultural Handbook Data and American Council on Science & Health Data.

11
Tobaccoless Road

Tobacco is our biggest killer! It causes over 300,000 people to die each year from lung cancer. And although tobacco's effect on childbirth defects is scientifically proven, the American Tobacco industry aims much of its $2 billion advertising campaign at young women. As a result, lung cancer has become the number one cause of death in women.

"Tobacco is a nauseating plant that is consumed by only two creatures—a small green worm and man. The small green worm does not know any better."

M. Hinkle

Worse yet, tobacco affects the non-smoker. A person sitting in a room filled with tobacco smoke breathes air contaminated with nicotine, tars and carbon monoxide. In fact, the sidestream smoke from the burning tip of a cigarette is ***more*** toxic than the air exhausted by the smoker since this smoke never gets filtered by the smoker's lungs. In either case, the carbon monoxide poisons your red blood cells, the tars destroy your lung tissue, and the nicotine causes hardening of your arteries (see photographs). This is to say nothing of the sore throats, headaches, inflamed eyes, irritated nasal passages and sinus congestion—all initiated by tobacco smoke.

"If I quit smoking, would you stay?"

A Tobacco-Free Society by the Year 2000

The U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Everett Koop, has called for a tobacco-free society by the year 2000. Plainly, it's a question of survival! Can we kill tobacco before it kills us? The answer lies with our children, for if they grow up resisting tobacco, who will the tobacco industry sell to in the year 2000?

We are making progress! The number of American smokers has been steadily declining. More public and private work areas are being designated ***smoke-free***. Every day tobacco receives more negative publicity from new research publications, government rulings and the news media. For instance, consider this 1987 UPI news story:

Husband Can't Smoke In His House

TORONTO. A 67-year-old woman who had suffered lung cancer and was fed up with cigarette smoke from her husband and his card-playing cronies won a temporary court injunction to stop his smoking in the house . . . "Her husband is a chain smoker and his continuing smoking in the house has hurt her health and caused a recurrence of some of the symptoms she had, like coughing," her attorney said. They have been married for ten years and still live together despite the court action.

United Press International

Tobacco-Free Living From a Child's Viewpoint

Kids are indestructible—at least they think they are. They are not impressed by the fact that cigarettes cause cancer and heart disease later in life. However, kids will listen to facts about the SOCIAL and MONETARY ill-effects of tobacco. For instance, consider these arguments:

- Tobacco smoke stinks. Smokers are social skunks. Would you want to be someone who people purposely avoid just because of your odor?

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Who wants to hang around with a social skunk?

- Cigarette smokers have bad breath. Their clothing, cars and furniture retain that stale, stinky odor too.
- Nicotine makes yellow stains. "Do you want to walk around with yellow teeth and stained fingers?"
- Smoking kills your taste buds.
- Tobacco is a great way to burn up money. A pack-a-day smoker spends $20,000 on cigarettes in a lifetime. If that money was earning interest in the bank, it would grow to $40,000 by the time you retire!

People who switch to smokeless tobacco think they're safe. But, the nicotine and tar in chewing tobacco cause lip and mouth cancer and gum disease. Plus, chewing tobacco causes the heart's nervous system to malfunction.

Children Can Help

About 50 million Americans still smoke. An equal number of children do not. And while those 50 million smokers represent poor health role models for our kids, realize that our children could serve as positive role models for adult smokers. In the Tobaccoless Road workshops that follow, your children will be given that opportunity as they get to help their loved ones "kick" the tobacco habit.

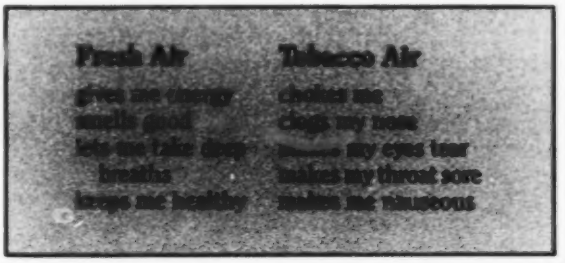
Appreciating Fresh Air

A great way to develop a distaste for tobacco-polluted air is to gain an appreciation of clean, fresh air. So close your eyes right now and picture a cool breeze passing by your face. Let that fresh air fill your lungs. Breathe deeply and enjoy it.

Next, picture yourself in a stuffy conference room filled with a haze of tobacco smoke. If you're starting to suffocate—just rise up and head back outside for some more fresh air. Now, try going through this visualization exercise with your kids. It works. In fact, the contrast between **fresh air** and **tobacco air** appears even greater to them because they are so dependent on their senses. *Conclusion: To help children strengthen their anti-tobacco attitude, let them learn outdoors so that they experience the feeling of breathing fresh air.*

Starting a Tobaccoless Road Project

Try beginning your "Tobaccoless Road" project by taking your kids out on an enjoyable walk simply to discuss how it feels to breathe fresh air versus tobacco smoke. As you walk along, try to identify pleasant scents in the air from flowers, trees and cut grass. Upon returning to the classroom, summarize your children's responses on an experience chart as shown below. As you develop this chart,



ask your kids if any of their family members or friends smoke in their house. It's likely that a bunch of little hands will raise, as kids start to attest to the fact that their relatives and friends are part of America's 50 million smokers.

Next, you might ask your class: "How can we help people we care about so that they can stay healthy and stop using tobacco?" Many of your children may have already tried to get a parent or other relative to quit tobacco. Unfortunately, most children take the wrong approach by complaining: "Mommy, when are you ever going to quit smoking?" This is the last thing Mommy wants to hear. It only irritates her and makes her even more defensive and adamant about her habit.

In defense of the smoker, we must realize that nicotine is a powerful, addictive drug, and breaking "the habit" is not easy. What the smoker really needs is caring, understanding, support, and a substitution plan that offers a better alternative than the nicotine. One alternative (to nicotine) is a child's love. It can penetrate the heart and give willpower to the mind. Expressed in an understanding way, a child's message can influence even the most addicted tobacco user. And the ***written word*** of a child is so much more powerful than the ***spoken word***. A sincere "I-care-about-you" letter from a child is tough to ignore (see Mary's letter). Even if your kids are not quite ready to write full sentences and compose complete letters, they can express themselves on paper to get their feelings across. When that letter gets mailed, it's headed straight to the heart of a child's loved one.

Can One Child Make a Difference?

If only one child in your class succeeds at reforming a smoker, then your Tobaccoless Road project will have been worth it. Even if no immediate gains are apparent, you and your students should not be discouraged. Often lifestyle habits will not change until years after that initial confrontation. However, just by helping someone else take responsibility for his health, that child simultaneously strengthens his own commitment against tobacco. And everytime a child stands up in class to talk about that achievement, 25 pairs of little ears listen and learn. One success story is like 25 success stories because your kids never forget.

Dear Mommy,

I am concerned about your health, and in gym we are learning about smoking, and how it is hazardous to your health. In gym we have to write to a smoker and tell them that we are concerned about their health—which I am about yours.

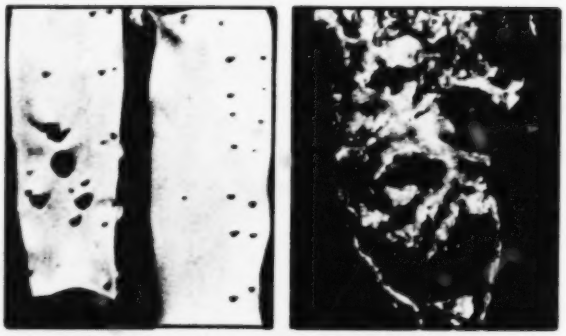
It is your choice if you want to smoke. I know you are going through a tough time of big tension, but if you want to try to stop for awhile, I will help you. By either buying lots of bubble gum for you (I have in one of my desk drawers lots of change money for something—just for saving to get something. It's called funds), or cutting up celery and carrot sticks and keeping them in the fridge. Or I will give up biting my nails if you give up smoking.

It's hard for both of us to stop these things, so we would be even. Let me know if you want to try for a month or so.

Love,

Mary

Your Blood Vessels and Nicotine



Look at the difference between the inside walls of these two sets of arteries. The clean artery (left side) belonged to an 11-year-old boy, a non-smoker. The hardened artery (right side) came from the body of a woman who smoked most of her life.

Other Tobaccoless Road Projects

To help you reinforce your current health promotion curriculum, consider the suggestions below:

- **Children's Incentive Awards**
  Could you give award stickers to children who made sincere efforts to help a tobacco user quit? One such award sticker ("I Helped a Smoker Quit") is shown in Chapter 18.
- **Poster Contest**
  Conduct a creative anti-tobacco poster contest and display your children's finished artwork on school bulletin boards.
- **Special Teacher Awards**
  Have your children select a school staff member most deserving of "tobacco-lifestyle improvement" and present that person with a special class-made award.
- **Local Programs and Resources**
  Stay in touch with your local chapters of The American Lung Association and the American Cancer Society. These organizations can provide you with films, videos, and other resources appropriate for health promotion in the classroom.

Tobaccoless Road Summary

Tobacco and other drugs are the biggest avoidable health hazard we face today. These drugs jeopardize human embryos, newborns, kindergartners, and all of the rest of us. It is critical that we give young children positive statements through role modeling. By emphasizing the joy of breathing fresh air while walking with our kids outdoors, we can influence our kids so much more than by (1) lecturing to them, or (2) having them read chapter after chapter in health textbooks. There is ***no substitute for experiential learning***. One fresh-air walk followed by a Tobaccoless Road letter-writing project can help a child build a drug-free attitude for life.

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A Healthy Day in Animal Kingdom

Nature's wild animals live healthier than people. Animals exercise outdoors in tobacco-free, clean air. Wild animals never eat in fast-food restaurants, and they simply walk away from stress. Then we domesticated animals as our pets: feeding them our high-fat leftovers, restricting their physical activity by pampering them in our heated homes and driving them to grooming salons. Now our little four-legged friends fill the waiting rooms of veterinary hospitals.

It makes you wonder if we wouldn't be better off modeling our lifestyles after the animals in nature. Certainly our children could learn a few healthy habits by studying their friends in the animal kingdom. For instance:

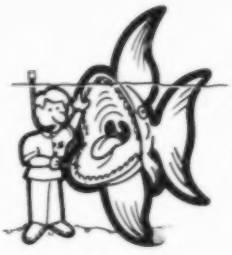
Rabbits eat grains and vegetables. They never feed on french fries, Big Macs, ice cream, and other fatty foods. Heart attacks kill 1000 Americans daily. But did you ever know a rabbit who died from a heart attack?

Cats and dogs walk all day long. That's why they have strong legs.

The only out-of-shape cats and dogs you ever see are the ones that ride around in their master's cars.

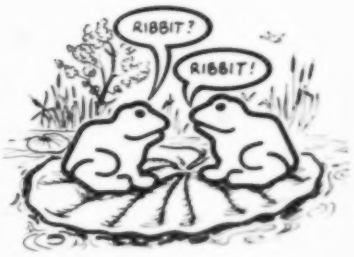
The Toucan (Too-kan), a tropical forest bird, feeds on fresh fruit. Toucans breath clean jungle air, free of tobacco smoke. There has never been a Toucan who died of lung cancer either!

Turtles take life easy. They relax after their swimming and walking workouts. Turtles never have nervous breakdowns. Some live to be a hundred years old.



Fish eat plants rich in vitamins and minerals, and they never eat candy. That's how they stay trim without developing cavities.

Baby ducks grow up healthy because their parents take them swimming and walking every day.



Millions of Americans have high blood pressure because they smoke, worry, and eat too much salt. Frogs eat low-salt green plants and talk out their problems. How many frogs do you know with high blood pressure?

A Classroom Drawing Project

Behind the humor in these animal characters are real lessons in nutrition and exercise. So try sharing these stories of lifestyle in the animal kingdom with your class. One way to do so, is to have your students draw pictures (either by freehand or using TRACER™ Animal Templates*) depicting animals and their healthy habits. As your children complete their drawings, ask them, "which animals have the healthiest habits?"

*The drawings of animals in this book were sketched from plastic templates called TRACERS™. If you are interested in obtaining sets of TRACERS for your children, you can purchase them through:

Gregory Stump Design
125 Piano Dr., Newark, DE 19713

The complete set of 8 animal templates costs $3.95, postage included. One classroom kit (3 complete sets of templates) costs $9.95.

Mrs. Jill Phillips took her class on a walking field trip to the Brandywine Zoo. As her kids watched a Pygmy Goat gnaw away at a bale of hay, she asked, "What's healthy about that goat's diet?" One girl answered, "It's eating whole wheat!"

Going on an Animal Walk

What kinds of animals could your children discover on a walk around your school? Squirrels, chipmunks, robins, butterflies, bees, worms, mice? The next time you take your class on a nature walk, pause for a moment whenever anyone spots an animal. Then discuss ONE healthy habit of that creature. For example:

SQUIRRELS eat healthy nuts and look both ways before crossing a road. DOGS walk lightly on their feet. CATS walk many miles and drink water when they are thirsty. BIRDS breathe clean air and exercise their hearts by flying. BIRDS also can walk on the ground like people. WORMS exercise all their muscles as they crawl along. WORMS avoid staying out in the sun too long. RABBITS eat raw vegetables and hop for exercise. People can eat raw vegetables but they are not made for hopping. Why?

Summary: A Healthy Day in Animal Kingdom

Nature's animals are healthy because they do not pollute their bodies with harmful substances, and they exercise regularly. These animals can serve as excellent role models for our children. Children relate well to animals. By having your students: (1) explore and discuss animal life on walks, and (2) draw healthy pictures of animal lifestyles, they will receive many of the simple health messages that they are not getting from FAST-FOOD advertising and TOBACCO-INDUSTRY billboards.

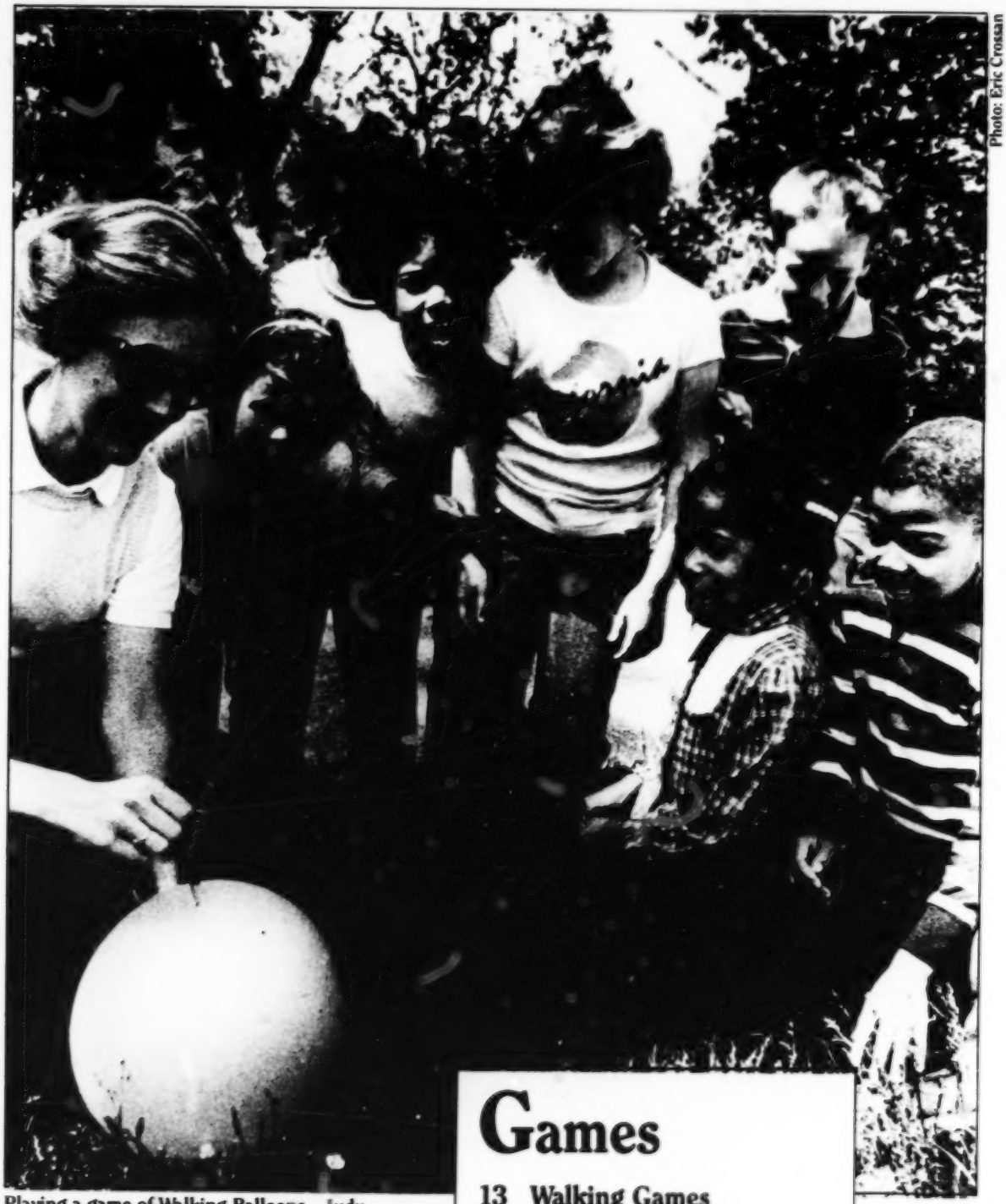


Photo: Eric Crossan

Playing a game of Walking Balloons—Judy Loveland, Dana, Keshia, Anna, Kevin, Jessica, Dwayne, Travis and Erin.

Games

13 Walking Games
14 Our Walk Across America
15 Cross-Country Pen-Pals
16 The Piggy Bank Game
17 Walking Balloons

13
Walking Games

Walking games provide children with outdoor educational experiences while they simultaneously have fun exercising. It takes 2,200 footsteps for the average child to walk one mile. Right, left, right, left, right, left. It makes you wonder if children would get excited over something as repetitive as plain walking. Actually they do—provided there's some entertainment along the way. The key is getting children to focus away from "right-left-right." Good walking games can do that.

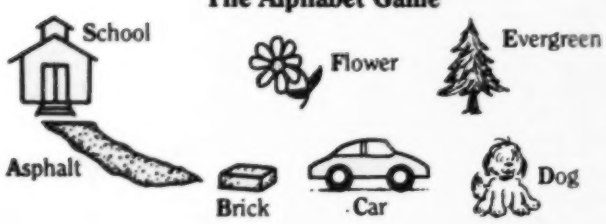
"During a walking game, children receive exercise without ever noticing it."

Exactly what is a "Walking Game?" To a little child, any diversion can be a game: counting license plates, walking down a sidewalk without stepping on the cracks, looking for a buried treasure, or even a walking spelling bee. The possibilities are endless as you will soon find out. Once you start playing these games, you will wind up inventing dozens more as you realize that walking can be entertaining, educational and exercise.

The Alphabet Walk

On a recess break, promise your kids that you will let them walk as long as they want, provided that they keep finding objects whose FIRST LETTERS spell out the alphabet in order. For example, first they would need to walk to an "A" object—**A**sphalt, **A**corn, **A**rch, **A**nt, **A**partment, etc. Once succeeding at "A," then your class would begin searching for a "B": **B**ridge, **B**rick, **B**irch, **B**allfield, **B**ullfrog, **B**ark. And so on as time permits. If one day you got as far as "L," then you can pick up with "M" on your next Alphabet Walk. If your class completed one full round of the alphabet (26 objects), you could still replay the game, searching for different objects the second time around.

The Alphabet Game



The Number Walk

As in the Alphabet Walk, your class will be searching for objects on a walk. But this time the emphasis is on counting those objects. For example, after finding ***ONE*** oak tree, you could walk over to the playground to find ***TWO*** swing sets. Soon you'd be admiring a flower garden, counting a collection of ***EIGHT*** daffodils. At each location, your kids would get to count the numbers out loud before looking all around to select a new direction for the next leg of their number walk. As you walk along, you can count telephone poles, car tires, mailboxes, pine cones, etc. If you could increase your count by ***ONE*** number a day, your kids would know how to count from ***1*** to ***200*** by the end of the school year!

Color Walks

During a ***"Color Walk"*** the goal is to hunt objects of a specific ***color*** while walking your school grounds. For instance, Mondays could be set aside as ***Red-Walk*** days, Tuesdays as ***Yellow-Walk*** days and Wednesdays as ***Green-Walk*** days.

Shape Walks

How many square, round, triangular, rectangular or cylindrical objects could you identify on a walk around your school grounds? Can your kids distinguish between two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects? Is a blade of grass two- or three-dimensional? How would you describe the shape of a raindrop . . . an apple . . . a cloud . . . a ball . . . a car. . . a tire . . . a door? Could you trace the outlines of various geometric shapes with your footsteps? For instance, after walking through a shallow puddle, your kids could try to paint circles, squares and triangles with their wet footprints.

The Spelling Bee Walk

Could you identify 10 objects in your schoolyard that could serve as Spelling Bee words? If so, gather your kids together and take them on a tour of your schoolyard. As you approach one of your selected objects, stop beside it. Ask whomever is at the rear of the line to spell out the name of the object you point to. If he spells it correctly, that child gets to move to the front of the line to lead the class walk. If that child misspells the word, then the next student in line gets a chance to spell his way to the front of the pack. This exercise is less competitive than a regular spelling bee where misspellers drop out of the game entirely and become spectators.

Memory Lane

On a grass lawn "plant" 5 colored balloons in a row, each spaced a few yards apart. Next, have your class walk past the balloons until the balloons are completely out of sight. Then, ask your kids: "Can anyone remember the order the colored balloons were in?" Divide your kids into 3 teams and hand each team a deck of 5 colored cards (same colors as the balloons). Ask each team to arrange their cards in the same color order as the balloons they just walked by (no turning around to peak!). After each team has arrived at a decision, walk your kids past the balloons again to let everyone check their answers. As your kids sharpen their memorization skills, you can add new colors and more balloons to keep this game challenging.

Questions for discussion: 1. Does the speed at which you walk past the balloons affect your memory? 2. What tricks can you use to remember things better? 3. Does walking help you to remember things better?

Being a Walking Artist

Ask your kids if they would like to go on a neighborhood walk to draw pictures of their favorite scenes... houses and flower gardens... clouds in the sky... birds in the trees... portraits of people. Regardless of what they draw, this art-walk project will help them appreciate the value of exploring and observing the environment. It's kind of difficult drawing a picture of a tree when you are sitting in a closed classroom. However, when you walk over to visit that tree, your eyes tell your hand exactly what to draw.

The Treasure Hunt

Who doesn't dream of finding a hidden treasure? Searching for it is half the fun. In the Treasure Hunt game the search is also the exercise—so be careful how you hide (or bury) your class treasure. After doing so, draw a treasure map with distances, clues and directions to help your kids find the treasure. Make the map as simple or as complicated as you think is appropriate for your kids.

"Take twenty paces in the direction of Chicago ... walk south for one minute... head straight for the big oak tree... on the side of the oak tree closest to the school, dig three inches deep into the soil and look for a dark brown bag."

Our Walk Across America

If 30 of your children averaged about 10 minutes of walking daily (a half mile each), then by the end of the school year your class would have totalled 3,000 miles walking—the distance from Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to The Space Needle in Seattle, Washington. And all along the way you could be discussing our nation's geography, history and culture while practicing mileage addition. This entire project is completely diagrammed in Chapter 14.

Cross-Country Pen-Pals

Writing pen-pal letters is a great way to make friends and learn about different areas of the country. It's also a fantastic way to exchange ideas with other elementary school teachers and children about walking and wellness. This concept is developed in Chapter 15.

The Piggy Bank Game

In the ***Piggy Bank Game***, children collect the loose coins they find on their walks throughout the school year. These coins get deposited in the ***Class Piggy Bank***. Week by week, everyone gets to count the "class savings" which will support a nutritious class party at the end of the year. The menu for this party is planned by your children. This way, they will simultaneously learn the value of saving and sharing their coin findings while focusing on good nutrition (see Chapters 10 and 16).

Walking Balloons

If you could wave a magic wand to have your class do any ***10*** outdoor activities, what would you choose? Now try writing these ***10*** activities on tiny slips of paper and inserting those slips into balloons. Blow up the balloons and "plant" them all over your playground or grass field. Invite your class on a ***Balloon Walk*** to pick out and pop their favorite balloon. The catch is that they have to carry out the commands within each balloon. As you will see in Chapter 17, Reading, Team Decision Making, Science and Fitness Walking all come into play in this game of ***Walking Balloons***.

Summary

A child's attitude toward exercise plays a major role in determining that child's long-term health. Why? Because exercise directly influences so many other cardiovascular risk factors such as: obesity, high blood pressure, cholesterol levels and smoking inclinations. Telling children to exercise for the sake of "staying healthy" isn't always effective. Long-term health is about #63 on a child's priority list. ***Fun*** is #1. That's why walking games are important. They show children that exercise can be fun and that "winning" isn't everything. Instead, walking games place the emphasis on "total class participation." Ten players make the school's basketball team. ***Everyone makes the walking team.*** Plus no one loses or gets hurt in a walking game!

14

Our Walk Across America

Have you ever dreamed about walking across this continent? How would it feel to cross mountains, deserts, plains and prairies, and to walk along the ocean beaches each day? Think about how much your kids could learn on a transcontinental foot journey!

In September of 1984, Rob Sweetgall set out on an 11,208-mile trek of the 50 states just to promote walking in America. As you read Rob's story (below) to your children, imagine crossing the North American continent on foot with your class. Then, see if your class would be willing to tackle their own cross-country walking project.

Rob's Walk

Hello! My name is Rob, and I am a walker. I grew up in New York City where I went to school just like you. I studied at a small college named The Cooper Union where I learned to be a Chemical Engineer. When I graduated, I was hired by the Du Pont Company in Delaware. That is when I started my running program to lose my college fat. While I was becoming fit, much of my own family became ill. In a year's time, four of my relatives died of heart disease.

Photo: Du Pont Magazine

About 150 children from Anna P. Mote Elementary School walked 3 miles with Rob from Delaware to Maryland to kick-off his 11,208-mile journey.

An 11,208-Mile Walk

Rob started his 50-state journey by first walking west across Montana in November and December. This put him in the deserts of the Southwest in the middle of winter. From June to August, Rob walked from New Orleans to Portland, Maine, then to New York City to finish his 365-day journey of America.

In 1981, I gave up my Engineering career to run and walk across America. As I traveled, I decided to stop in and visit schools to talk to children like you about the importance of exercising, eating well and not smoking. So in 1982, I started from the White House in Washington, DC and ran south toward Florida. Halfway through the journey, I noticed that the more running I did, the worse I felt. So, when I reached California, I switched to all walking. Sure enough, my body began feeling better. By the time I returned to The White House (10,608 miles later), my legs and feet were healed from all the healthy walking I did on the last half of my trek.

The next year, I took off on another journey, but this time I just wanted to talk to everyone about walking. As in most of my first journey, I traveled all alone—without a support vehicle. All I carried was a little pack around my waist, some money, and my road maps so that I wouldn't get lost. I bought food along the way in grocery stores and restaurants. I rented rooms to sleep in at night so that I'd be rested for my next day of travel. Sometimes, when it got cold at night and there were no motels along the road, I'd knock on the door of a farmer's house, explain my situation and ask for a place to sleep. As long as they believed my story, they would take me in for the night. Most often, strangers would feed me too! People were very friendly to me.

To stay healthy I ate plenty of fruits, vegetables and grains. I purposely avoided eating junk foods in fast-food

restaurants. Often, I'd eat 10 times a day, but I still lost eleven pounds on the trip because walking burns up so many calories.

My favorite part of the trip was meeting new people, making friends, and helping children like you realize how important their health really is. Maybe, someday you might think about this walk and decide to walk across America too!

NOTE: The story of Rob's walk is told in a colorful video titled Walk America! (25 minutes), and in a book titled The Walker's Journal which chronicles the day-to-day travels of Rob across America. Both the video and the book are available through Creative Walking, Inc., PO Box 699, Newark, DE 19711.

Questions for Classroom Discussion

Q: What do you think Rob took in his waistpack?

A: Since the waistpack was very small, Rob could only take the most important items for his walk: money ($100 traveler's checks), road maps, a toothbrush and dental floss, color slides (for his school talks), foul weather clothing, a camera and tape recorder, and a list of schools and friends he would visit. He carried food on his side. He washed his only set of clothing along the way.

Q: How did Rob stay warm in the winter?

A: Rob wore many layers of wool clothing under a waterproof, windproof suit made of Gore-Tex fabric. He also carried mittens, a hat and face mask for walking in snowstorms. Also, Rob used 3 pairs of Rockport walking shoes for the entire journey. One pair lasted 8700 miles.

Q: How did Rob eat on the road?

A: Because walking burns many calories, Rob had to eat 8 to 10 times a day. He would stop at restaurants and cafes when he arrived in town. If the next town was very far away, he would stop in a grocery store and make sandwiches to carry on the road. Sometimes families would invite Rob in for dinner when they found out what he was doing.

Q: What kind of animals did Rob see and hear?

A: In North Dakota and Montana, Rob heard coyotes calling out in the night. In the daytime he saw jack rabbits hopping in the prairie brush. Out west there were a lot of cows and bulls and farmyard pigs and chickens. Grazing in the grass were a lot of white sheep, too. Occasionally, Rob spotted deer and antelope. Once on a farm in Oklahoma he walked past a herd of buffalo.

Kindergartners at Fort River Elementary School began their own walk across America. Their map of the United States is stenciled onto an asphalt play area using large homemade cardboard templates. Now, at recess they can play "Geographic Hopscotch."

Q: How did Rob get to Hawaii and Alaska?

A: From San Francisco Rob hopped on an airplane and flew to Honolulu, Hawaii for a 1-day walk. He did the same in Anchorage, Alaska. Those two flights were the only way he could have walked ***all 50*** states in one year.

Q: What was the smallest school that Rob visited?

A: Near Baker, Montana, Rob visited the Fertile Prairie School—a one-room country schoolhouse. The total student body (K through 6) consisted of 6 students.

Q: How did the walk change Rob's body?

A: When the walk started, Rob weighed 175 pounds. At the end Rob weighed 163 pounds. Most of Rob's weight loss was fat—not muscle. The doctors who studied Rob also found that the walk made Rob's heart and lungs stronger. And, in 11,208 miles of walking, Rob did not suffer a single injury. In fact, it was the healthiest year of his life.

Q: How much money did Rob find along the highway?

A: To keep things interesting as he walked, Rob played a game to see how much loose change he could find on the road. Sometimes he found pennies and nickels. Other times, he spotted dimes, quarters and half dollars. Each night he recorded his findings for that day. When the trip ended, he had collected $182.82 (see Chapter 16, ***The Piggy Bank Game***).

Walking Your Class Across America

The distance from Philadelphia to Seattle following the Old National Highway and The Yellowstone Trail is roughly 3,000 miles. This was one of the first routes pioneers took to settle the West. It also provides a very educational foot journey for your class. If each of your kids could average about a half-mile a day, your class could accumulate enough mileage to have walked across America. And just imagine how much geography, science, history and math they could learn along the way!

A Class Project

Shown on the pictorial map is your walking route across America. Major landmarks and cities are also tabulated for your 20-week class walking project. Every time your class finishes a walk, approximate their total mileage and score it on the box-chart by simply coloring in the little boxes. One box equals 15 miles. To walk across America, your goal will be to shade in all of the 200 boxes on the chart. Thus, by completing a 1-mile field trip (30 students), your class earns 30 x 1 or 30 miles. That lets you color ***TWO*** boxes!

Plotting Your Way Across America. To plot your progress, simply color in the little boxes based on how many miles your children walk. Each box represents 15 miles. Two hundred boxes represent a complete 3000-mile cross country walk.

A Walk Across America

START Philadelphia, PA

Where the U.S. Constitution was signed in 1787

Week 1 Westminster, MD

Week 2 Brownsville, PA

Week 3 Columbus, OH

Walking the Old National Highway on which settlers traveled West in their covered wagons

Week 4 Toledo, OH

Note the flat farmlands around Lake Erie. These lands were once part of the Great Black Swamp.

Week 5 South Bend, IN

Week 6 Chicago, IL

See the Skyscrapers tower over Lake Michigan in the Windy City.

Week 7 Dubuque, IA

Crossing the Mississippi River into the west and along the richest farm soil in the country

Week 8 Rochester, MN

Week 9 St. Paul/Minneapolis

Week 10 Ortonville, MN

Across farmlands of corn and wheat, through the Twin Cities, and westward over the windy plains

Week 11 Aberdeen, SD

Week 12 Sioux Reservation

Crossing the Missouri River into Mountain Time

Week 13 Baker, MT

Prairie, cattle, and a real big sky

Week 14 Billings, MT

Week 15 Bozeman Pass, MT

Week 16 Helena, MT

Climbing up toward the Continental Divide of the Rocky Mountains

Week 17 Mullan, ID

Tall evergreens sitting on top of mountains full of silver ore deposits

Week 18 Spokane, WA

Week 19 Leavenworth, WA

Over the Cascade Mountains towards the Pacific Ocean

Week 20 Seattle, WA

Home of the Space Needle. You made it to the Finish! Congratulations!

15

Cross-Country Pen-Pals

What is school like for children living on the Montana prairie . . . or atop the Continental Divide of the Rockies . . . or near the bayous of Louisiana . . . or along the bluffs of Mark Twain's Mississippi? Do children nationwide study the same subjects the same way? Do other K-3 children study wellness and walking?

"Pen-pal friendships are so special. Writing to someone you've never met can make both you and your pen-pal feel like brother and sister."

One way to explore these ideas is through Cross-Country Pen-Pals. Realize how much your kids could learn composing a pen-pal letter together addressed to a far-away school. In addition to making new friends, they'd get to share their walking-wellness projects and ideas with children across the nation. Literally this pen-pal writing project is worth its weight in gold ink!

Composing Your Class Letter

In your classroom, invite your children to choose one town on the map for their cross-country pen-pal project. Small rural schools might interest children from an urban area—and vice versa. By writing to a local Postmaster or the school district office of the town you choose, you should be able to obtain the forwarding address of your chosen pen-pal school.

In the meantime, you can start composing your letter in class. One way to start is by building an outline of what you want to say on the blackboard. If your kids are slow to volunteer ideas, remind them of all their interesting walks and healthy projects. Maybe you could start your letter by telling a story about your town and its history. Or, you could even include drawings and a class photograph with your letter or possibly a brochure and a picture postcard of a landmark in your town. Having your students sign their letter will add a more personal touch. Eventually, your children could pick specific students at their own grade level to continue writing to on a one-on-one basis.

How will your letter get mailed? Could you take a walking field trip to the Post Office or to a local mailbox to send off your letter? Hopefully, within a month, you and your kids will share the excitement of opening a similar letter from your new friends across the continent.

To help you get started, consider the sample pen-pal letter below.

The Shortlidge Striders
Shortlidge Elementary School
17th & West Streets
Wilmington, DE 19808

Dear Pen-Pal,

We are a second grade class at Shortlidge Elementary School in Wilmington, Delaware. Our school is near the Brandywine River and Zoo. This year we started going on walks to explore. We walk every day. Some days we take long walks, and other days we go for short walks. On the first day of May, we walked with balloons to the park to celebrate May Day. Today we are walking to the Post Office to mail this letter to you. All our walking keeps us healthy and alert in our class. We also add up our miles because we are walking across America. We started from Independence Hall in Philadelphia and hope to walk 3000 miles to reach Seattle, Washington. If all of us walk a half-mile a day, we will make our class goal. Next month, we pass through your state—Minnesota. We'll wave to you as we pass by.

We were wondering if you walk at school, too. Do you walk far? What kind of trips do you take? Are there a lot of farms near your school? What kind of animals do you see near your school?

It's time for us to say goodbye. We hope that you will write back to us. When you do, we'll write you another letter.

Have a nice day!

Sincerely,

Your pen-pals in Delaware

16
The Piggy Bank Game

When Rob Sweetgall walked 11,208 miles around America, he became kind of a "coin prospector"—picking up loose change along the highway. Rob's goal was to find $50 in one year. Even across Montana's prairie and the Mojave Desert, he found dimes and quarters. In total, Rob collected $182.82 on his walk. It wasn't the actual money that thrilled Rob, but the experience of finding it. Discovering something brings out the kid in all of us, "Gee! Look what I found!" It's amazing how simply looking for a penny can divert one's mind from boredom and make a mile or two fly without notice. For kids, this is especially valuable.

Saving for a Class Party

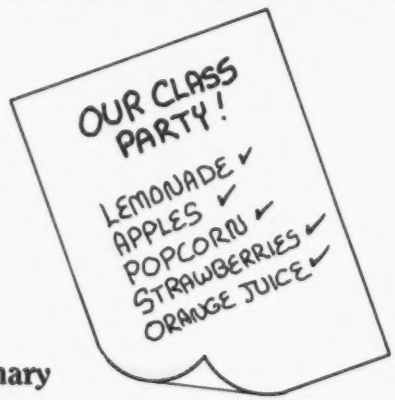
How much loose change could you ***find*** and ***save*** in one year's time? A penny here, a penny there. Most Americans probably walk right past a penny or two each day. That's ***FIVE BUCKS A YEAR!*** Multiply $5 by 200 million Americans. That's ***ONE BILLION DOLLARS.***

Let's apply this math to your class. If each of your children could average ONE PENNY per day, or FIVE CENTS per week (silver coins and green bills count too), then your class could save ONE DOLLAR per week—or ***FORTY DOLLARS*** this year. In so doing, they would learn how to count and save money as they squirrel coins away in a CLASSROOM PIGGY BANK.

If your children averaged a nickel a week as "coin prospectors," they'd wind up with $40 in loose change by Spring for their nutritious class party.

> ***"As a nation, we leave one billion dollars lying in the streets."***

Week by week everyone could watch the class savings grow. Soon, the question might arise, "What are we going to do with our savings?" Suggestion: Use the piggy bank funds to reward your kids at the end of the year with a party! This opens up a realm of educational possibilities. For example, could your class plan their own nutritious menu for their party? Picture your kids counting their piggy bank savings each Friday afternoon. As the savings grow, everyone could vote on new healthy foods to add to your party shopping list. This activity could serve as a mini-nutrition lesson prior to the weekend. At times, if their "coin prospecting" luck is running thin, you can sprinkle a few coppers around the classroom and schoolyard for inspiration. Coins found by children and their family members on weekend walks can count too!



Summary

The ***Piggy Bank Game*** provides a real-life, motivational opportunity for your children to practice and learn: (1) the value of saving, (2) counting and handling money, (3) sharing, (4) team goal setting, and (5) nutritious food planning. Best of all, this game provides your kids with year-long reinforcement in the subject areas of math and nutrition along with the excitement of "treasure hunting" on their walks.

17
Walking Balloons

Children love balloons! There's a certain fascination held for this bright shell as it floats unpredictably with the air currents. A balloon can be punched, volleyed, or transformed into a "jet rocket." But when one explodes, the "fireworks" provide children with short-lived entertainment and a desire to "pop" another balloon. However, in the Walking Balloons Game the entertainment is long-lasting and educational too! It's kind of a fitness party that works like this:

Hidden inside a bunch of balloons are little slips of paper on which are written "walking exercises" for your kids to follow. The fitness walking instructions that ***you*** insert into the balloons can cover any number of exercises and skills that you would like your children to practice that day. ***Ten*** messages slipped into ***10*** balloons can make for an exciting game once you ***inflate*** and ***plant*** these balloons in any open outdoor play area such as a grass field, park or playground. Your next step is to begin the game by leading your kids outside to the "balloon hunting grounds." As you stand outside, inform your kids that as a group they can walk to any one balloon they choose and burst that balloon. However, when the message falls out of that balloon, everyone must carry out the "exercise" instruction spelled out on that slip of paper. So, in effect, your kids are signing a mini-fitness contract with you—one in which ***group decision making*** will come into play. For instance, how will your class come to a decision on which balloon to "pop" first? If your kids are of different opinions on which balloon to walk to first, you may witness some arguments. This being, ask yourself: How can my kids learn to compromise and reason better? After all, what's the big deal about selecting one balloon over another?

Ms. Judy Loveland's first-graders walk briskly to their chosen balloon.

As you prepare to burst your first balloon, gather your kids around you in a tight circle—then puncture the balloon with a pointed object.

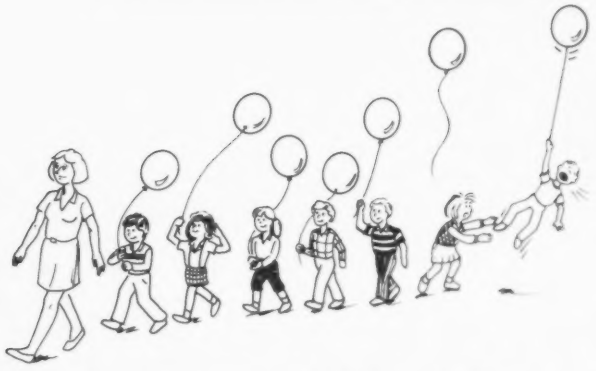
Next, pick up the fallen message slip and let everyone read it out loud together. You may be suprised by your kids' enthusiasm to read this note. That's why this game also serves as a reading exercise. Even children who are not strong readers become excited about reading the balloon messages. The problem is that your kids may not want this game to end. You can solve this problem by planting one balloon with a message: "Oops! It's time to walk back to our classroom!"

Dana, Keshia, Anna, Kevin, Jessica, Dwayne and Erin hold their breath in anticipation.

Now it's time to read the message and do a walking exercise.

Types of Balloon Messages

- Let's walk to the balloon that is closest to a tree!
- Let's walk to the balloon with the brightest color!
- Let's sing a song on our way to our next balloon!
- Let's do 5 sit-ups!
- Let's walk to the balloon that's closest to the North Pole!
- Let's walk straight and tall to our next balloon!
- Let's measure how fast our hearts are beating now!
- Let's stretch our legs!
- Let's walk to the farthest balloon!
- OOPS! It's time to walk back to our classroom!



Suggestions for Walking Balloons

- Create instructions that support your curriculum in areas of counting, estimating, the senses, science and fitness exercises.
- "Plant" your balloons NOT too far in advance of your "hunting" time—or they might disappear! One parent volunteer helping you can be invaluable.
- Let your kids decide on which balloon to walk to next.
- Keep everyone together as your class walks from balloon to balloon so that balloons aren't popping all over the playground.
- Position your balloons relatively far apart (30 to 70 yards) to give your kids a better walking workout.
- About ***10*** balloons make for a great air-robic workout!

The Science of Balloons

Balloons can also help children understand principles of science. For example, what could your children learn by answering these questions? Why do some balloons float while others sink? Why do balloons make loud noises when they burst? Why does your heart beat faster right after a balloon bursts? How far could a helium-filled balloon travel if it were released from your school? Why do balloons fly off together in a balloon release? How could you find out where your helium balloon landed?

Another Balloon Walk

At the Shortlidge Elementary School, 600 children (grades 1-3) celebrate May Day with their teachers and parents by walking with helium-filled balloons to nearby Brandywine Park where they conduct their own creative song and dance show. The festivities conclude with a synchronized balloon release. The children write their names and return addresses on cards attached to their balloons. Some of their balloon cards have been returned from as far away as Martha's Vineyard (Massachusetts) and the North Carolina Coast.

The Easter Egg Hunt

Sometimes it's nice to hunt eggs instead of balloons—especially around Easter time! So, this spring consider playing an egg-hunt game. Like the Walking Balloon Game, you insert messages into plastic Easter eggs. The eggs are hidden in a grass field. In this game, though, you can split your class into different color teams (red, yellow, green, etc.) Each team's objective is to pick up eggs of their team's color. After 10 minutes of egg hunting, blow a whistle to have your teams report to you with their discovered eggs. Then, one by one, each team can open its eggs and follow the specific instructions found inside. The trick to this game is to teach your children to cooperate by not picking up eggs that belong to another team.

Summary

Balloons can help motivate children to get a few miles of walking exercise without them even realizing it. By carrying out their balloon messages, your students also get to practice their walking techniques and muscle-toning exercises. In addition, the game of Walking Balloons is an opportunity for children to learn about air pressure, wind, sound, colors, shapes, distances, directions, intuition and group decision making.

Progress

18 Walking Awards

19 Administrative and Parental Support

20 Summertime

Photo: Linda Hartung

Homer Fighting Bear, first grader, walking happily at Lame Deer Elementary School.

18
Walking Awards

Today, when children do something well, we often reward them with ice cream cones, chocolate chip cookies, and trips to fast-food restaurants. And while our intentions are good, the "treats" we are rewarding them with are not. Ironically, we are really penalizing our children with such rewards.

The "kind mother" in us says, "Oh what's wrong with a little treat for Junior once in a while?" The problem is that "once in a while" gets to be an everyday occurrence. And by the time kids get to the first grade, they react like Pavlov's dogs to anything sugary or deep-fried.

"Every time you reward a child with a cookie or an ice-cream cone, you're giving that child nutritional training for life."

Worse than the fat and cholesterol we're pumping into our kids' arteries is the message that is being pumped into their brains. "Do well and win a fattening treat." This "reward" psychology most of us learned early in life as little food treats kept showing up in front of our faces every time we excelled. Now for health's sake, can we help children feel proud of their accomplishments in some way other than food? SUGGESTION: Try a few hugs or some pats on the back. Award stickers work great too! Unlike ice cream and french fries, the latter are non-fattening, inexpensive and long-lived.

Special Walking Awards

How would you recognize the walking achievements of your children? Would you award your children T-shirts, patches, ribbons, extra-credit marks or award stickers? Before you decide, try to imagine all of the possible categories of achievement.

For example, awards could be given to students who:

- reach a set mileage goal, say 25 or 50 miles for the year
- get their families involved in a walking program
- improve the most in their walking programs each week
- improve their diets and lose the most body fat
- earn ***three*** or ***four*** straws during the Little Straw Walk
- help a relative or friend break the tobacco habit

If all your kids made wonderful strides in these categories (and wouldn't that be great!), you could be handing out hundreds of awards in your classroom. From a motivational and practical standpoint, it would be advantageous to recognize all children who make ***any reasonable effort*** to improve in these areas—and to do so on a ***continuing basis*** throughout the school year. If this sounds cost prohibitive, it doesn't have to be. For example, many teachers use sticker awards to motivate their children. Stickers are easy to distribute and reasonable to buy at under 15 cents apiece. Children adore them!

A collection of these sticker awards designed around the themes of **Walking and Wellness** is displayed on the next page. Picture your students collecting these awards throughout the year as they strive to achieve their walking goals. When a child earns a sticker, he could proudly mount it on his own Walking Award Card. A sample of one such card ("My Walking Awards") follows. Note how this card is designed to look "non-empty" no matter how many gold foil stickers a child earns. One possibility is to store these cards safe and sound inside a class walking scrapbook. Another option is to mount them on a classroom bulletin board. These cards would also be great show items on open-house parent nights. At the end of the year each child could take his Walking Award Card home.

To use this "Walking Award Card" concept, simply photocopy page 56 and provide each child with his own "MY WALKING AWARDS" card. Then, all you need is a bunch of award stickers. Should you obtain ***ONE*** class set of 230 walking award stickers (see page 55), you'd be able to hand out about ***8*** award stickers to each of your students.

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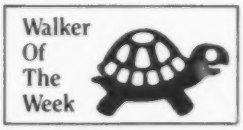
SPECIAL WALKING AWARDS™

"I earned 3 straws in my first Little Straw Walk."

SPECIAL WALKING AWARDS™ are examples of how you can use something as simple and inexpensive as a sticker to help your children achieve their **Walking** goals. These stickers are printed in 2 colors (blue and black ink) on gold foil paper, and can be ordered through **Creative Walking**, Inc., PO Box 699, Newark, DE 19711, (302) 368-2222. The cost for a class set of 10 sheets is $5[00] which provides you 230 awards at a cost of about 2 cents per sticker.

"Our class voted Mrs. Smith as Walking Teacher of the Month because she started walking at lunchtime and after school."

"I wrote a letter to my mommy telling her how much I loved her, and why I didn't want her to die from lung cancer."



"I was the most improved walker in my class this week."

"I asked my parents to walk with me after school. Now our family takes 20-minute walks after dinner each night."

"I earned 4 straws in my second Little Straw Walk."

"Since I began walking, I no longer eat as much junk food."

"I've walked 25 miles so far this year by walking at lunch."

"Now, I'm up to fifty miles and walking toward the hundred-mile mark."

"Wow! I never thought I'd reach 100 miles!"

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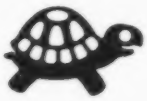
My Walking Awards



My name is _____

My goal is to earn _____ sticker awards this year

My favorite award is the _____

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Administrative and Parental Support

At one South Carolina elementary school, the principal invites two students outside at lunch for long walking conversations every day. It's an offer her students cannot refuse. After several weeks, she selects two new children to accompany her. This rotation goes on throughout the school year. Everyone gets a chance to walk. Being selected is not a punishment either. It's simply this principal's way of controlling her weight and finding out what's really going on in her school!

Most importantly this South Carolina administrator is sending a positive wellness message to her entire school. Wouldn't it be terrific if all principals were such good role models? With support like that, think how easy it would be to: (1) organize a staff walking club, (2) implement a school walking curriculum, (3) focus inservice training on wellness topics, and (4) win PTA support for new walking projects.

Things happen when your administration is sold on a concept. That's why the most effective wellness education conference in the nation, Oregon's Seaside Wellness conference, requires attending school district teams to be comprised of both ***teachers*** and ***administrators***.

Selling Wellness Up the Line

What if your principal or superintendant is not overly enthusiastic about the issue of "Wellness Education?" What can you do to make things happen? First consider inviting that skeptical administrator to one of your walking lessons. Possibly he or she will even take a few steps with your children. Remember, compared to other physical activities, walking is the least threatening. By witnessing smiling, alert faces, your administrator may start becoming a believer in walking and wellness. The more direct contact and participation your principal and superintendent have, the better your chances of promoting wellness in your school and district, respectively.

Sixty-one (61) elementary schools line up in alphabetic order to kick-off Orange County Public Schools' Walk For Wellness.

CASE STUDIES: Building a School Walking Program

Many schools are now choosing lifetime recreational sports in place of competitive athletic events. Educators realize that encouraging a child's competitive nature is not as valuable as developing that child's wellness attitude. Reaching 100% of the student body is also critical. So is parent/teacher involvement. Taking all this into account, you will find one ***cost-free, injury-free*** sport applicable to people of all ages and athletic abilities—walking. Following are some outstanding examples of how specific educators helped strengthen the Walking-Wellness theme within their schools, districts and communities.

Kindergartners Walk in Portland's Rose Parade. At Portland's Alameda Elementary School, kindergarten teacher Carolyn Johnson incorporated a walking program for both her morning and afternoon classes by taking her kids out on both "casual" and "fitness" walks. At the end of the year, her children's endurance had improved so much that she decided to reward them with a walking field trip in the Portland Rose Parade. On an unseasonably hot, 90° day, all 50 of her kindergartners went the full 2-mile distance—and without one complaint!

A Walk For Wellness. In the greater Orlando (Florida) area, Orange County Public Schools decided to organize a major, non-competitive 3-mile Community Walk to benefit physical education in their elementary schools. Under the leadership of Pam Oliver, Physical Education Consultant, a teacher's steering committee was organized. One month later, 61 elementary schools agreed to participate in the walk as 3,000 walkers (50% students, 50% adults) pre-registered. More than $10,000 was raised for their school system, not to mention all the favorable "PR" Orange County Public Schools received in the community. Incidentally, every child finished that Orlando school walk. For its second annual event, Orange County Public Schools hopes to attract 8,000 walkers.

Building Your Own Walking Course. You can pay a small fortune for a station-to-station fitness trail—or you can build your own for next to nothing. Oaklea Middle School (Junction City, Oregon: population 3300), decided to do it the economical way when they realized they needed a separate walking trail. So on a shoestring budget, they bought a few truckloads of bark chips and solicited the in-kind services of a heavy equipment operator. On overtime, Oaklea's dedicated maintenance crew completed the final landscaping. A month later, students and citizens of Junction City had a beautiful ¼-mile walking track for an out-of-pocket cost of less than $1,000!

Extra-Curricular Walking. If we could transform all the spare minutes of recess-time at an average elementary school into productive, fresh-air walking, much of our childhood weight problems would disappear. This is exactly what the staff at Pine Bluffs Elementary School did when they started an extra-curricular schoolwide intramural to see which grades (1 through 6) could finish a trip across America on the Old Oregon Trail. Miles walked by students ***before school, at lunch, at recess*** and ***after school*** all counted. Students logged their mileage on a computer. Progress reports were given each week, and weekly awards were presented to the top distance walkers at each grade level. Surprisingly, the lower grades were competitive with the upper grades on a miles-per-student basis.

The Privilege of Walking. In September of 1984, principal Paul Carlson gave students an opportunity to start a walk across America by permitting them to walk the opening three miles with Rob Sweetgall on his 50-state walk. However, to gain the privilege of walking, each student had to make several commitments, including: (1) finishing the 3-mile walk, (2) following through on a personal fitness walking program, and (3) participating in a follow-up pen-pal project. In this way, principal Carlson treated the 3-mile exercise ***not*** as some chore or physical education requirement—but rather as a treat or privilege that had to be earned. One hundred fifty students participated. All finished!

Students Operate Walking Exhibit. Amidst dozens of health/fitness exhibit booths set up by professional organizations, hospitals and health clinics at the Worcester Health Fitness Fair, a group of boys and girls from Fort River Elementary School proudly stood with an exhibit on *"Walking and Wellness"* of their own. At their booth they talked to visitors about the benefits of walking, and how they used walking in their physical/health education program at school. Matt, Ryan, Jessica, Michael, Mathew and Rachael also handed out hundreds of "Walking" brochures which they had written and designed themselves (their principal, John Dalton, had these brochures professionally printed). In addition, these "Fort River Walkers" performed a stage show on walking technique for the public right after their live radio interview on NBC affiliate, WNEB.

Statewide Wellness Conferences. Oregon is one state that believes "we teach what we are!" Eleven years ago under the leadership of health education consultant Len Tritsch, Oregon held its first statewide wellness conference at the oceanside resort of Seaside to help educators improve lifestyle behaviors to be better health role models. To attend this conference, each Oregon team (a team must include at least one member of the school administration) signs a contract agreeing to develop an **ACTION PLAN** for their school district—a health plan which they commit to implementing the next school year. In its first year, the Seaside Wellness conference drew 140 participants. Eleven years later, the conference included teams from almost all Oregon school districts, totalling 1050 conferees. Five hundred conference applicants had to be turned away! Now over 20 states in the nation are conducting wellness conferences based on the Oregon Seaside Wellness model. Does your state have one? If not, ask your administration to contact the Oregon Department of Education in Salem, Oregon.

Georgia Educators Practice What They Teach. In 1986-87 Cobb and DeKalb County Schools started integrating **WALKING** into physical education as 80 of their teachers received one full day of professional training focusing on the **WALKING WELLNESS** curriculum.* That summer (1987) 14 of those elementary specialists joined this writer-walker on a 95-mile, 3-day walk from Savannah to Jekyll Island, Georgia to arrive in time for Georgia's first statewide wellness conference (titled **Wellness Week I or WWI**). Despite the 95° heat and mosquitos, we all survived the walk. Now, children and teachers in 125 Cobb and DeKalb County elementary schools will hear their inspiring story. Note: The two school administrators responsible for physical education in Cobb and DeKalb County, Bob Moore and Billy Gober, walked with their teachers on that 95-miler.

*__WALKING WELLNESS__ is an upper elementary-middle school walking curriculum consisting of creative workshops which focus on aerobic conditioning, pacing, walking technique, nutrition and weight loss, stress, tobacco-free living, environmental science and lifestyle planning. The course is taught primarily by 4th through 8th grade teachers. The **Walking Wellness** curriculum is a natural progression for all children who have been involved in the **Walking for Little Children** program. For more information on **Walking Wellness**, contact **Creative Walking, Inc.**, 407-S White Clay Center, Newark, DE 19711, or call (302) 368-2222.

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Summertime

One of the most comprehensive health research studies examined the lifestyle of over 16,000 Harvard University graduates. This study concluded that the single most important factor in any exercise program is lifelong consistency. Applied to your classroom, the Harvard data indicates that it is essential for children to maintain their walking throughout the year. So, with school closing for the summer, consider how you could help them plan a continuing walking program through their vacation and into next September.

What Have We Done This Year?

For a first step, take some time with your kids to summarize all your walking experiences this year. As your students recall specific walks, record their responses on an experience chart. Hopefully, one response will trigger another until your entire year of walking is chronicled on a chart before you.

This Year We Walked...

to the grocery
to the art museum
to the Post Office
on a treasure hunt
on a nature trail
on neighborhood walks
in a parade
on a family day walk
on a spelling bee walk
on an alphabet walk
on a balloon walk
on a bean bag walk
on straw walks
on snack-pack walks
across America

With your list in place, ask your kids to pick their favorite walks. Also, have them explain their reasons. Besides helping your children remember their favorite walking exercise games, this lesson will give you insight for planning next year's walking program.

Our Favorite Walks

- balloon walks
- tunnel walks
- puddle walks
- straw walks
- snack-pack walks

After discussing "Our Favorite Walks," ask your children, "What have we learned from all of our walks?" Once again, record all of their responses on a chart pad.

What did we learn?

Walking...

- keeps me healthy
- makes my heart strong
- relaxes me
- helps me make new friends
- keeps me thin
- lets me see things
- lets me live longer
- is fun exercise

Bridging This Year and Next

What kind of follow-up walking program will your students receive next fall? Will their new teacher(s) pick up where you left off? Are there any ways you could help maintain the "walking momentum" that you created this year? By sharing your walking success stories with those teachers who will have your children next fall season, you can start bridging the gap between this year and next. This "sharing" can take place on a lunchtime stroll with a few of your colleagues—or at a walking faculty staff meeting. Inviting other staff members to participate in a workshop is a great way to help spread an appreciation of walking throughout your school.

However, if other teachers do not respond as enthusiastically as you might wish, try not to get too upset. You're dealing with relatively new concepts—wellness and walking. And you can't always change the beliefs of others overnight. All that you can do is act on your own convictions, knowing that your efforts ***have*** and ***will continue*** to make a difference. For regardless of how other staff members treat the subject of walking, you and your children can still maintain your personal fitness programs. Just because your "prize little walkers" will move on to a new classroom setting next fall does not mean that their school walking careers must come to an end. For instance, consider beginning a Walking Club with other interested staff serving as guiding faculty. How about brown-bag or lunch bucket walks? They could be a blast. Or after school outings like intramurals and Saturday morning "Fun Walk Days."

A key step to maintaining this walking momentum is having your children establish their own specific walking goals for this summer. Offering kids something as simple as a ***50-mile*** gold foil award sticker (for children who log 50 summer miles) can serve as a catalyst in this regard. So before school is closed for the summer, try devoting one lesson to "Planning My Summer Walking Program." Ask yourself, "Could each of my students establish ***ONE WALKING GOAL*** to strive for this summer?"

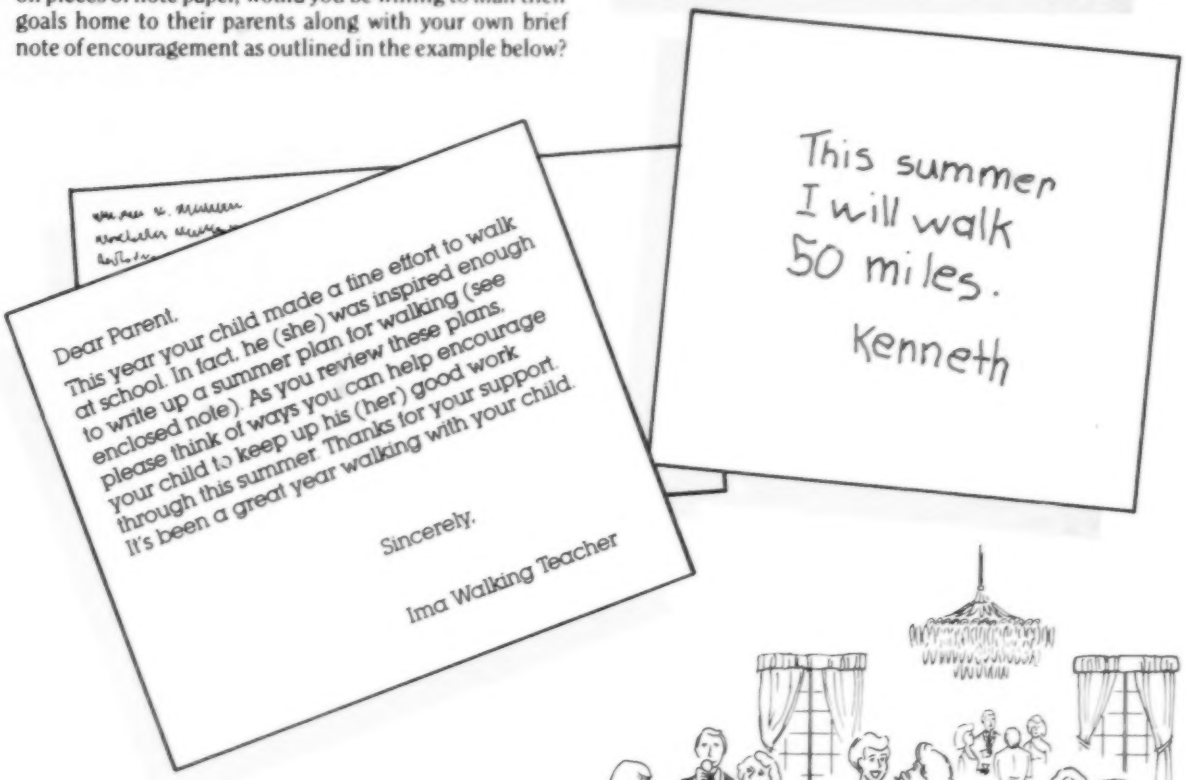
Creating Summer Walking Goals

This summer I plan to:

- take long hikes with my parents
- keep a walking diary
- walk at least 50 miles
- lose 10 pounds through walking
- take morning walks with my brother
- invent one new walking game for my classmates next year

Parental Support

If your children recorded their "Summer Walking Goals" on pieces of note paper, would you be willing to mail their goals home to their parents along with your own brief note of encouragement as outlined in the example below?


This summer I will walk 50 miles.
Kenneth
Dear Parent,
This year your child made a fine effort to walk at school. In fact, he (she) was inspired enough to write up a summer plan for walking (see enclosed note). As you review these plans, please think of ways you can help encourage your child to keep up his (her) good work through this summer. Thanks for your support. It's been a great year walking with your child.
Sincerely,
Ima Walking Teacher

Summer, At Last

Walking can be a trick or a treat—depending on whether you are policing 20 excited children on a field trip or strolling peacefully on a quiet beach. But, at last summer is here for you to unwind. It's your time to get away from the hustle-bustle of the noisy schoolyard. Maybe you will take sunset walks on the beach, or go on long hikes in the mountains, or enjoy some country tours along the rolling backroads. It's your time to relax. So enjoy a summer of great walks. You deserve it!

"There are three things I like about teaching —June, July and August."

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The Authors

Robert Sweetgall is a serious pedestrian who is often referred to as **The Pied Piper of American Walking**. Since 1982, he has walked nearly the circumference of the earth on TWO separate 11,000-mile journeys, speaking on the subjects of ***walking*** and ***wellness*** to over 140,000 school children on tour. He is author of five books on walking and the man responsible for introducing a formal **Walking Wellness** curriculum in public schools across America. Currently, Robert Sweetgall trains and motivates educators, and lectures nationally at professional conferences, conventions, colleges, corporate sites and hospital health centers. He is also the only man to have walked the 50 states in one year.

Robert Neeves is an associate professor of exercise physiology and co-director of the Human Performance Laboratory at the University of Delaware. He earned his doctorate at the University of Utah specializing in cardiopulmonary physiology. Currently, he teaches courses in Exercise Prescription, Nutrition and Human Performance, and Cardiac Rehabilitation while serving on the Governor's Task Force on Wellness Education and Delaware's Advisory Committee on Teaching and Learning. Dr. Neeves is also a research consultant for the U.S. Olympic Bobsled, Luge and Ice Skating teams. He is a former world record holder (Masters Division) in the 50-and 100-meter breaststroke.

"A sound mind in a sound body is a short but full description of a happy state in this world."
—John Locke "Some Thoughts Concerning Education"

Walking for Little Children

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